

# Human Rights Defenders

## ANDORRA

In August, NGOs Diversand and Stop Violències faced public backlash from sections of the media and the Council of Ministers after announcing that they would present a report to the United Nations as part of Andorra's upcoming Universal Periodic Review. The organisations were accused by critics of lying and exaggerating the information contained in the report, although these claims were not substantiated or fact-checked.

The report, prepared in July, formed part of civil society submissions to the UPR and highlighted concerns related to the protection of human rights defenders, including calls for public recognition and reparation measures. The backlash raised concerns about the treatment of civil society organisations engaging with international human rights mechanisms. Andorra's Universal Periodic Review was held in November 2025. By the end of the year, no detailed governmental position had been published addressing the specific concerns raised.

## ARMENIA

In June, human rights defender Mamikon Hovsepyan was suspended from the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM), the body overseeing HIV programmes. (see also under Equality and Non-discrimination). A document circulated to CCM members on 25 June announced a formal reprimand and temporary suspension, citing alleged violations of

the CCM and Global Fund Code of Conduct, including claims that Hovsepyan had spread "misinformation". In October, Hovsepyan filed a legal challenge seeking annulment of the decision. The Administrative Court transferred the case to the Civil Court, stating that the Ministry of Health was not responsible for the actions of the CCM.

## BELARUS

In December, Belarus released 123 political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski and prominent opposition leader Maria Kolesnikova, following two days of talks with the United States aimed at improving bilateral relations. The releases were part of a broader agreement in which the

United States announced the lifting of sanctions on Belarus.

However, state-led repressions on human rights defenders and civil activists continued. As of December, 1145 people were held in detention as political prisoners according to the Belarusian Human Rights Centre Viasna. During 2025, at least 1254 people were persecuted on political grounds, including LGBTI community members.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

LGBTI human rights defenders attacked in March 2023 by a mob in Banja Luka are still waiting for their assailants to be prosecuted.

## KAZAKHSTAN

On 21 and 22 November, further incidents targeted human rights defenders participating in public events. Activists Ardzh Tursykhana, Temirlan Baimash and Zhanar Sekerbayeva were detained by law enforcement authorities. During detention, Tursykhana was reportedly threatened with rape and subsequently fined for allegedly using obscene language. Baimash and Sekerbayeva were subjected to surveillance following their release, and the Prosecutor's Office initiated criminal proceedings against Sekerbayeva. These measures formed part of a broader pattern of pressure against Feminita members and associated activists during the reporting period.

Between February and March, members of Feminita were subjected to detentions and short-term arrests. In early February, following the disruption of a Feminita meeting by members of the Union of Parents, police detained 25 participants. While all were later released, co-founders Zhanar Sekerbayeva and Gulzada Serzhan were held for several hours and subsequently fined for allegedly leading an unregistered organisation. In late February, Sekerbayeva was reportedly lured from her gym under false pretences and sentenced to 10 days of administrative detention. The sanctions were linked to Feminita's May 2024 march in Almaty, during which activists demanded accountability in a high-profile femicide case. (See also under Freedom of Association)

## LITHUANIA

In November, a Russian LGBTI activist residing in Lithuania experienced online [harassment](#) that escalated to physical threats at her residence. Following coordinated cyberattacks on several human rights organisations' social media channels, the activist received direct death threats from members of a closed online community that promotes "traditional values" and supports Russia's war in Ukraine. Unknown individuals visited her home in Vilnius, leaving threatening messages, yet local police declined to open an investigation, citing insufficient evidence of criminal intent despite documented threats and video evidence.

## TAJIKISTAN

In 2025, the space for human rights defenders in Tajikistan continued to shrink significantly. Human rights defenders reported high levels of fear, stress, and psychological burnout linked to the ongoing pressure and uncertainty surrounding their professional activities. Concerns about reprisals, loss of funding, and personal safety led to increased self-censorship and reduced public engagement, particularly on sensitive issues such as LGBTI rights.

According to [reports](#) by the IPHR, the broader human rights environment in Tajikistan in 2025 was characterised by restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and association, as well as by intimidation and surveillance of civil society actors.

## TURKEY

In 2025, participation in international political and human rights forums continued to expose LGBTI activists to criminal proceedings. This was illustrated by the prosecution of Enes Hoccoğulları, a Council of Europe youth delegate for statements made during an official session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, addressing police violence, shrinking civic space, and the arrest of opposition mayors.

In September, the first [hearing](#) in the case was held before the Ankara 86th Criminal Court of First Instance. During the hearing, Hoccoğulları stated that he was the only member of the Turkish delegation investigated in relation to the session, and argued

that the indictment relied on significant translation inaccuracies that distorted the content and context of his remarks. The prosecutor recommended that he be tried without detention, and he was released on 8 September pending trial.

In December, a trans activist was [detained](#) during a home raid by the Counter-Terrorism Branch, citing an investigation initiated three years prior to the arrest. It was announced to the public in a press statement made at the Ankara Branch of the Human Rights Association that the victim was repeatedly questioned without a lawyer, subjected to ill-treatment, and that during the detention process, their views on LGBTI associations, solidarity networks, financial resources, and the concept of family were questioned.