



Kazakhstan

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In February, a coordinated defamation campaign targeted the LGBTI community through the circulation of a fabricated end-of-term video purporting to present USAID's "achievements" in Kazakhstan. The video falsely alleged that LGBTI organisations and individual activists had received millions of dollars in foreign funding. These unsubstantiated claims were widely disseminated and contributed to renewed hostility towards LGBTI groups, reinforcing existing prejudice through deliberate disinformation and further stigmatising human rights defenders working in the country.

In March, Nauryzbay kazy Taganuly, head of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (DUMK), issued a public statement opposing LGBTI equality. In a video published on the DUMK's official Instagram account, he claimed that initiatives framed around women's rights and combating violence were being used to promote what he described as an unacceptable movement. Taganuly characterised LGBTI identities as immoral and foreign to Kazakh society, calling for their rejection in the name of tradition and cultural values.

In mid-March, during a meeting of the National Kurultai, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev commented on global political developments, arguing that "globalism is losing its relevance" and that state nationalism and regional power dynamics were becoming more prominent. He criticised what he described as the long-standing promotion of "so-called democratic moral values, including LGBTI," through international NGOs and foundations, claiming that such efforts had interfered in countries' internal affairs. Tokayev also expressed support for the policies of the United States administration under President Donald Trump, praising its stated commitment to opposing what he referred to as the "deep state" and restoring "traditional moral values."

In late October, a group of members of the Majilis, Kazakhstan's lower chamber of parliament, established a working group to promote draft legislation aimed at banning what it described as LGBTI and paedophile "propaganda". Several ministries publicly indicated their support for the

proposal and signalled their readiness to enforce it. On 12 November, the Majilis adopted the draft law, which prohibits the dissemination of information relating to so-called "non-traditional sexual orientation" in public spaces, media and online, and provides for administrative penalties. In December, the Senate approved the legislation, and it was signed into law by the President at the end of the year.

EDUCATION

In January, it emerged that Kazakhstan's Ministries of Health and Education had submitted to the government a purported review of international research on the alleged impact of LGBTI issues on children. The analysis reportedly relied heavily on a Russian-language article critical of LGBTI equality. These materials have since been used in government deliberations on whether to introduce legislation restricting what authorities describe as LGBTI propaganda. The review followed developments in the previous summer, when the Ministry of Culture partially endorsed a public petition calling for restrictions on "LGBTI propaganda," agreeing to limit the circulation of sexualised content involving minors. At that time, the Ministries of Science, Health, and Education were instructed to assess the claimed impact of LGBTI issues on children and to prepare an official report.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, deputies of the Majilis complained about what they described as "information attacks" by representatives of the LGBTI community following their public statements against LGBT people and requested intervention from the security services. In response, the Chair of the National Security Committee (KNB) stated that the agency would not investigate such matters, indicating that they did not fall within its mandate.

In 2024, Kazakhstan's Ministry of Health commissioned a study examining the alleged impact of so-called propaganda of same-sex relations on young people. In March 2025, the research concluded that sexual orientation cannot be altered through external influence or propaganda, and that the presence of LGBTI

people can have a positive impact on adolescents by supporting self-understanding, reducing isolation, and providing access to peer support for minority youth. According to reports, the findings provoked dissatisfaction among authorities, who had reportedly expected the study to justify restrictive measures against LGBTI people similar to those adopted in Russia. Shortly after President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev publicly criticised what he described as so-called democratic moral values, including LGBTI, and accused international NGOs of using them to interfere in domestic affairs, the Ministry of Health removed the report from its website without explanation.

In June, the organisers of Miss Kazakhstan issued a statement after media reports suggested that trans women might be eligible to participate in the national beauty contest. The reports stemmed from comments made by the contest's director during a press conference, which, according to the organisers, were taken out of context. The organisers underlined that this year's theme, Freedom of Choice, is intended to highlight respect for diversity, individuality, and the right of every woman to be herself. Within this framework, they said they are open to public debate on issues of stereotypes, beauty standards, self-expression, and inclusiveness. However, they emphasised that the official rules of participation remain unchanged.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In February, Magerram Magerramov, head of the People's Party of Kazakhstan (PPC), submitted a request to the Minister of National Economy and the Minister of Justice regarding the activities of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Magerramov demanded a full audit and the publication of reports on all funds received in Kazakhstan from international sponsors. He also called on the government to draft a bill aimed at protecting the mental, psycho-emotional, and physical health of Kazakhstani children. Citing a White House press release on "dubious projects" funded by USAID, Magerramov pointed out that between 2020 and 2024 Kazakhstan received about \$2 million from the agency for human rights and equality programs in Central Asia. According to him, the implementing partner of this program was the European International Organisation for LGBT

Protection. Further details emerged on March 14, when reports indicated that USAID had canceled contracts in Central Asia, including Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. These funds had been allocated for the projects 'Strengthening Civic Participation in Kazakhstan' and 'Strengthening Human Rights and Equality', the latter of which was intended to support LGBTI organisations in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in their human rights advocacy.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Between February and March, members of the NGO Feminita faced administrative [charges](#) linked to the organisation's lack of official registration. Co-founders Zhanar Sekerbayeva and Gulzada Serzhan were charged with leading an unregistered organisation and fined 393,000 tenge (approximately €800) each. The Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights noted that Feminita's repeated applications for registration have been denied, effectively preventing the organisation from operating lawfully. (See also under Human Rights Defenders)

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In January, Yedil Zhanbyrshin, a member of parliament from the ruling Amanat party, publicly praised the policies of US President Donald Trump and cited recent rhetoric from the United States on LGBTI issues to argue in favour of introducing restrictions on what he described as "LGBTI propaganda." At the same time, the government promoted public petitions as part of its stated effort to reflect public opinion. One of the first petitions to exceed the 50,000-signature threshold required to trigger official consideration was submitted by the Union of Parents of Kazakhstan and called for a ban on both overt and covert expressions related to LGBTI issues.

In late July, Majilis deputy Edil Zhanbyrshin proposed introducing criminal liability for individuals who engage in LGBTI propaganda, whether openly or indirectly. His proposal came during a parliamentary session otherwise focused on labour legislation and Kazakhstan's obligations under International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions. Zhanbyrshin's intervention shifted the discussion toward

restricting expressions of LGBTI identity, calling for punitive measures at the criminal law level.

DATA COLLECTION

In July, a survey by the foundation Strategy found that 67.3% of respondents in Kazakhstan support restricting LGBTI propaganda at the legislative level, while 79.8% consider such propaganda a threat to youth. Overall, 84.2% expressed support for government measures aimed at protecting traditional values. The project coordinator at Strategy emphasised that the widespread use of social media has increased young people's exposure to harmful content, which she listed as including pornography, violence, and non-traditional relationships. She argued that governments must actively counter externally imposed behavior models that contradict cultural traditions. According to the survey, the main concern expressed by respondents was the negative influence of LGBTI content on the physical and emotional development of teenagers. Civil society responded to the survey by underscoring that the study is not supported by any scientific data and is only a subjective opinion that may affect the rights of Kazakhstanis.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In February, the activities of USAID in Kazakhstan and across Central Asia were significantly reduced under the administration of US President Donald Trump. Mazhilis Deputy Magerram Magerramov accused the agency of lobbying for LGBTI rights and argued that LGBTI and feminist activism in Kazakhstan is externally driven through such financial support rather than internal social demand, and alleged that USAID has financed minority protests in the country. Political scientist Gaziz Abishev also weighed in, stressing the importance of distinguishing between humanitarian aid and political influence. While supporting funding for education, science, and assistance to vulnerable groups, he warned that politicised projects often serve as tools of foreign pressure under the guise of development.

In May, Zhanarbek Ashimzhanov, Member of the Mazhilis of the Parliament, called on the Deputy Prime Minister to tighten control over social networks, scrutinise the activities of NGOs, and to release the Ministry of Culture's study on the influence of LGBT

on minors. Ashimzhanov reiterated his demand for a legislative ban on so-called LGBTI propaganda. He argued that organisations active on platforms like TikTok promote phenomena alien to our culture and deliberately target vulnerable children and adolescents. According to him, such destructive ideas are introduced into Kazakhstani society with the help of foreign grants, which he claimed threaten national security. His request was supported by nine other deputies. In response, Kosherbayev stated that the Ministry of Culture monitors social networks around the clock to prevent the spread of harmful content among minors.

In July, representatives of Feminita spoke at the 144th session of the UN Human Rights Committee, held under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), highlighting violations of the civil and political rights of LGBTI persons in Kazakhstan. As Kazakhstan is obliged to report under the ICCPR every eight years, the intervention posed questions to the Kazakhstani delegation on the rights of LGBTI persons, the ongoing petition against so-called LGBTI propaganda, the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, and access to medical services for trans people.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

On 21 and 22 November, further incidents targeted human rights defenders participating in public events. Activists Ardzh Tursykhan, Temirlan Baimash and Zhanar Sekerbayeva were detained by law enforcement authorities. During detention, Tursykhan 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)

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In late February, members of Kazakhstan's parliament proposed a legislative ban on gender-affirming surgeries. The initiative was introduced by Majilis deputy Magerram Magerramov, who called for such procedures to be prohibited in law, using stigmatising language to portray trans people as mentally ill and framing gender-affirming healthcare as incompatible with Kazakh culture. He argued that allowing these procedures would normalise what he described as "destructive" ideas influenced by Western values, and asserted that Kazakhstan should reject such approaches in favour of what he characterised as traditional norms.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In late December 2024, the Almaty Defense Department issued a statement regarding a trans blogger who had received a military summons from the Medeu district office in Almaty. The Defence Department clarified that summonses are issued to all citizens eligible for conscription, regardless of social status, profession, or other factors. Whether she will ultimately serve will depend on the outcome of a medical examination and a review of the documents she provides.