

Statement: The President of Georgia must not sign “On Family Values and the Protection of Minors” legislative package into law

[News, Georgia](#)

ILGA-Europe call on President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili not to sign into law a draconian anti-LGBTI package that will have far-reaching negative impacts on lives and human rights, and on Georgian society as a whole.

In the face of rising authoritarianism, Georgia’s civil society and LGBTI community are battling draconian laws inspired by Russia, threatening their democratic rights and freedoms ahead of a pivotal national election. ILGA-Europe stand in support of our Georgian members and other organisations, and urge swift and decisive action from policy-makers and allies.

On 17 September, the Georgian Parliament, in a third and final reading, passed the “On Family Values and the Protection of Minors” legislative package originally proposed by the Georgian Dream party, which aims to ban information about LGBTI people in various public spheres and directly curtails the rights and freedoms of LGBTI people in Georgia, impacting the population of Georgia as well as foreign residents.

This legislative package was announced on 4 June 2024, just two weeks after the adoption of a [Foreign Agent law](#) that would see civil society and independent media that receive more than 20% of their funding from abroad forced to register as organisations “bearing the interests of a foreign power” and to open all their internal documents for inspection by the authorities.

The anti-LGBTI legislation specifically targets the LGBTI community with a slew of amendments to 18 existing laws. It purports to combat “LGBT propaganda” and protect national and religious values. Its provisions include:

- A ban on advertising, public demonstrations or information in schools in connection to LGBTI people and identities
- A ban on legal gender recognition
- A ban on any kind of trans-specific healthcare, such as hormone therapy
- Making “biological sex” markers mandatory in state issued documents and labour contracts
- A ban on adoption for same-sex couples
- A ban on any legal recognition of same-sex couples

The laws that are being amended are:

- The Civil Code
- The Law on Adoption and Guardianship
- The Code on Children’s Rights
- The Law on Healthcare
- The Law on Civil Acts

- The Law on the Procedure for Issuing Identity Cards (Residence Permits) and Passports of Citizens of Georgia for Registration of Citizens of Georgia and Foreigners Residing in Georgia
- The Law on Early and Preschool Care and Education
- The Law on General Education
- The Law on Vocational Education
- The Law on Higher Education
- The Law on Broadcasting
- The Law on Advertising
- The Law on Freedom of Speech and Expression
- The Law on Assemblies and Demonstrations
- The Law on Civil Service
- The Code of Administrative Offences of Georgia
- The Criminal Code
- The Labour Code

The far-reaching effects

This law will in practice make it impossible for Georgian LGBTI people to have their partnerships recognised, to adopt, or for their children to be protected by law. These provisions will mean that foreigners moving to Georgia will not have their family ties recognised by the Georgian state, which will result in numerous practical and administrative issues, including separation of families.

Trans people, and some intersex people, will have their rights and quality of life greatly reduced due to the ban on legal gender recognition and on any kind of trans-specific medical interventions including hormone therapy. Lack of access to such support has been proven to lead to significantly worsened mental health outcomes for trans people, which can be life-threatening.

The requirement of state issued documents and labour contracts to show the so-called “biological sex” marker of the person will impact many trans and intersex people in all areas of life, including access to education, healthcare, employment, whether they are Georgian citizens or foreign residents. The mismatch of identity documents with a person’s gender identity and/or expression will result in higher rates of discrimination, violence and harassment against many trans and intersex people, in all areas of life.

The ban on public advertising, information in schools, and public gatherings is an effective censorship of the portrayal of LGBTI people in the public sphere, which not only curtails freedom of expression and assembly of LGBTI people and anyone wishing to support them or even talk about them, but will have a direct impact on various sectors of society such as business, culture, media and education. These provisions contravene Georgia’s own Constitution.

The legislative package also impacts the ability and future of a range of professions, such as medical professionals, educators, reporters, to do their jobs without discrimination, censorship and in adherence with the Georgian Constitution, while not facing prosecution for it. Finally, while claiming to protect minors, the package will put minors at risk of violence and violations of rights. The impact of this type of legislation on the lives of children is rigorously documented, for example in a [report by HRW](#).

Closing space for civil society and human rights defenders

The combination of both the foreign agent law and the anti-LGBTI legislation renders the functioning of LGBTI civil society organisations and activists in Georgia almost entirely impossible. Already in May, the [Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights commented](#) on how the foreign agent law would specifically target LGBTI civil society. On 21 May, the [Venice Commission published an Urgent Opinion on the foreign agent law](#), concluding that the law’s restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and privacy are incompatible

with international and European standards regarding democracy and non-discrimination.

Political scapegoating

With Parliamentary elections in Georgia scheduled for October 2024, in which the Georgian Dream party is seeking another term in office, the fast-tracked adoption of this law and heightened political hate speech targeting LGBTI people is a clear example of instrumentalising LGBTI lives for electoral gain. Such hostile legislation and incitement of hatred by public figures against LGBTI people has already led to a surge in hate crimes and attacks on civil society in the recent period. As evidenced by the examples of other countries, more hostility towards the LGBTI community can be expected.

In light of these developments, we urge the Georgian authorities to curb the violence targeting the LGBTI community and civil society.

Significant opposition

Opposition to this bill has been significant among Georgian society, which supports democracy, EU accession and a thriving civic space, and is opposed to Russian-style anti-democratic laws. Huge protests have been taking place in recent months all over Georgia, in which tens of thousands demonstrated in the streets against the adoption of this legislation.

We call on the President of Georgia not to sign the “On Family Values and the Protection of Minors” legislative package into law, and on all our international allies to support this call.

We call on the Public Defender of Georgia to take all measures to evaluate the compatibility of this package of laws with Georgian law and international and European standards on fundamental rights and freedoms, including but not limited to the European Convention on Human Rights and the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights, and to ensure the challenging of any breaches through the relevant courts.

We call on all our allies and future allies in civil and political movements to take measures to stop the long-term impact of anti-democratic and anti-European initiatives in Georgia and other countries targeted by increasing authoritarianism.

In light of these developments, we remind the EU and Georgia that respect for rule of law and human rights must remain at the core of EU-Georgia relations. The EU’s accession process is anchored in the respect for fundamental rights, including those of LGBTI people, and such respect remains a cornerstone in all areas of the EU’s external action. We therefore call on the EU institutions to ensure that all discussions on EU-Georgia relations take into account the human rights concerns, and that all steps toward engaging with Georgia are used to promote tangible human rights improvements in the country. We also call the EU to adopt efficient measures, including immediate visa bans for members of Parliament and other officials responsible for introducing, drafting, and adoption of this law.

- [Georgia](#) currently sits on the 36th place out of 49 European countries on our Rainbow Map with a total 25% score. The recent legal developments might significantly push the countries’ score and ranking down.