



ICELAND

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In July, a gay man was denied entry to a nightclub in downtown Reykjavík because of his perceived sexual orientation. The bouncer at the door said “gays are not allowed inside”. The nightclub later apologised and fired their employee.

In September, a group of 10-15 neo-Nazis gathered in the centre of Reykjavík, flying the flag of the Nordic Resistance Movement and trying to engage with people. This was the first such action in the city.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A trans woman was physically assaulted by two men in a Reykjavík suburb in June. Candice Aþena was on her way home when the men approached her, and after realising she was trans, kicked her in the face. This is not the first time Candice has been harassed.

In November, Samtökin '78 launched a page on their website, where people can report cases of hate crimes, hate speech, or discrimination. Four reports were submitted before the end of the year.

BODILY INTEGRITY

The parliament adopted the Gender Autonomy Act (see more under **Legal gender recognition**) in June. Regrettably, the law falls short of protecting intersex people. The provision outlawing medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries on intersex children was removed before the adoption. Instead, a newly set up committee will discuss the issue and decide over next steps in the coming 12 months. Local intersex activists expressed grave concern.

“These practices are rooted in disgust, that our bodies aren't good enough, that they don't look the right way” - Kitty Anderson (Intersex Iceland) to the Thomson Reuters Foundation

Civil society worked hard for a positive legal change. Intersex Iceland, Samtökin '78, and Amnesty International Iceland produced short videos to show solidarity with trans, non-binary trans, and intersex people. AI Iceland also released a report this year, entitled ‘No shame in Diversity: The right to health for people with variations of sex characteristics in Iceland’.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The 20th Reykjavík Pride Parade took place on 17 August, as part of a ten-day cultural festival.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Asexuals in Iceland and Trans friends - parents and guardians of trans youth and trans children - both became affiliate members of Samtökin '78 in March.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

During the official visit of US Vice President Mike Pence at the Höfði house in the capital, IT company Advania and Iceland's largest trade union, Efling flew rainbow flags outside their buildings closeby. During his official meeting with Pence, Iceland's President Guðni Jóhannesson wore a rainbow bracelet. A protest was also organised by Samtökin '78 and other NGOs.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 18 June, the Parliament passed the Gender Autonomy Act. The Act replaces the previous requirements of mandatory diagnosis and medical interventions for legal gender recognition, and introduces the self-determination model. It also allows for anyone to choose the gender marker X. The law falls short of ensuring the rights of trans youth. Legal gender recognition will be available to minors only with parental consent or if unavailable, with the agreement of an expert panel. The draft initially placed no limit on the number of times a person can change their legal gender. The adopted version, however, limits it to one, except in special circumstances.

“The whole purpose of the law is that people have the right to determine their legal gender and name [...]. Putting restrictions on that is against the whole idea of the law. I guess we'll just have to see how this works in practice, because in the law, it doesn't really say who makes the decision on what is 'special circumstances.’” Uglu Stefania Kristjónudóttir Jónsdóttir to the Reykjavík Grapevine

Prior to its adoption, the Synod of Iceland (priest gathering) sent a letter to parliament expressing support for the Act. The Synod also stated that a lecture by Samtökin '78 helped them understand the issues better, and that they are now allies.



POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

No Borders activist, Elínborg Harpa Öunduradóttir was arrested at Reykjavik Pride in August. She was on her way to meet friends, carrying a “queer liberation” sign and wearing a pink mask, when the police stopped her, allegedly because she was in a restricted zone. She was told to remove her mask and leave the area. When she started recording the encounter and called her friends for support, the police pushed her to the ground, arrested her, and took her to the police station. Öunduradóttir claimed the police targeted her because she is a known activist.