



# Cyprus

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Two young trans people were attacked in March in Nicosia by a group of seven, and suffered serious bodily harm.

*"We demand the drafting of strict legislation concerning hate crimes that protects people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics."*

- Accept Cyprus

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, Ombudswoman Maria Stylianou Lottides said in May that daily acts of discrimination against LGBT people are still a reality in Cyprus. She noted that Cyprus has made important progress in the recent years, but that a number of steps were outstanding. She specifically highlighted the importance of criminalising anti-LGBT hate speech, ensuring access to legal gender recognition, ensuring that school books are not discriminatory or hateful, and that same-sex relationships gain legal recognition.

## FAMILY

A trans woman from Brazil was deported in September, despite being the spouse of a Cypriot citizen. The deportation is in violation of the Civil Union Law, which extends family rights to LGBTQI+ people. Civil society also reported that the woman was held in isolation, instead of a mainstream facility for migrants. Accept urged the government to reunite Nanda with her spouse. The case is currently being legally challenged.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Cyprus Pride was celebrated online. The events were particularly important for the community this year, as many had to stay home with hostile family members during the lockdown. On 27 June, Queer Cyprus Association and Accept LGBTI Cyprus organised the first online joint Pride events.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In January, a Cypriot trans woman was detained in Egypt and has been held in solitary confinement since. Tina's legal gender is male, which exposed her to harassment in Egypt. Tina has been denied access to her hormones while in detention. Accept learned about the detrimental impact of the situation on the woman's mental and physical health, and urged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure she is promptly released.

## HEALTH

The informational workshop for healthcare providers on intersex children's rights, organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Accept had to cancel the in-person Pride events this year, but launched a two-week media campaign on LGBTI rights that ran on the radio, online, and in printed media.

In September, Accept established its first ever official space, which will be utilised as a safe space for the community and an information point on LGBTI rights in the country.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Accept requested financial support from the government in July, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cancellation of Pride events. The government has not responded.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The legal gender recognition reform continued to be stalled this year.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Accept conducted a study on political representation and participation of the LGBTQI+ community, and held an online workshop where political parties discussed LGBTI rights and necessary legislative changes. Accept was disappointed about the low level of interest among politicians and also found that most party representatives were under the impression the LGBTQI+ rights are fully secured in the country.

Accept held the Queer Perspectives exhibition, providing an opportunity for the LGBTIQ community to express themselves through art and come together.

The first LGBTQ+ film festival in the Republic of Cyprus took place this year. Due to the pandemic, the Queer Wave festival was held online, allowing viewers to stream the movies.

The local magazine Downtown featured a rainbow cover page for the first time this year.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In July, the Ministry of Health announced that it would cover the costs of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and surrogacy for married couples and single individuals. The move aims to remedy the low reproduction rates in the country. Same-sex couples who cohabit or are in a civil union, are excluded from the measure.

# Northern Cyprus\*

## ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The LGBTI+ community and particularly trans sex workers, were severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many lacking access to basic necessities and food. The Nicosia Turkish municipality, Gönyeli municipality and the Social Services Department provided food for those most in need during the lockdown period. Queer Cyprus Association also provided financial support to those struggling the most, including trans sex workers.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

On 9 March, the Turkish Cypriot community amended the Criminal Code to criminalise hate speech on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. The amendment was passed unanimously in the parliament and came into force in March.

Since March, a number of hate speech cases were documented and have been reported to the Prosecutor's Office.

## DATA COLLECTION

Queer Cyprus Association became a member of the newly established Human Rights Platform, which will monitor and report on human rights violations.

## DIVERSITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY

As part of the Black Lives Matter Movement, QCA initiated an Anti-Racist Network in the northern part of Cyprus.

## FAMILY

This year's amendment on the law on visa permits allows non-citizens, who are "partners" to a Cypriot citizen to be exempt from visa obligations. Civil society welcomed the gender neutral wording.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Following the first bicomunal Pride festival in 2019, Queer Cyprus Association and Accept LGBTI Cyprus organised the first online joint Pride events in June this year. The event was planned to take place in the buffer zone to unite the communities, but was moved online due to the pandemic.

This year's Diversity in Academia Conference was held online, organised by QCA.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

QCA documented a stark increase in the number of people reaching out to their solidarity line to receive psycho-social or legal support.

QCA moved all its events online this year, due to COVID-19. It held a weekly live stream called "The Other Chats".

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

QCA launched the "LGBTI+ Friendly Presidency Candidate Protocol" for the October elections, consisting of practical commitments that candidates make for LGBTI+ rights. Two candidates signed the protocol, but neither of them were elected in the end.

\*Areas not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus.



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