



# Georgia

## ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on Georgia's LGBTQI and trans communities in 2020. On 24 April, the government released its anti-crisis plan on handling the pandemic, failing to address the needs and priorities of LGBTQI people. Civil society repeatedly demanding inclusive policies and practical measures to support those most in need. In lack of adequate state support, activists and civil society launched fundraisers to support the most vulnerable. Local organisations received a one-time support package from the state, including food and hygiene items, to distribute among LGBTQ people in crisis.

Initiated by UNDP, a working group was later set up to provide basic living expenses to LGBTQI people in need. Individuals must submit an application, and a multidisciplinary group of state representatives, local NGOs, grassroots groups, community members and a range of other experts, make a decision.

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In March, Tbilisi Pride won a lawsuit against a printing company that refused to print its materials because of the organisation's profile. The court established discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Dozens of human rights organisations signed a petition against Georgia's nomination of Sopio Kiladze, Chair of the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee of the Parliament, to serve as one of the 18 experts on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Kiladze is known for her homophobic views.

In September, the Charter of Journalistic Ethics found that an April TV programme spread stigma and misinformation about people living with HIV and Hepatitis C. In November, the Charter established that a TV presenter encouraged discrimination against trans people in September.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Daily protests started on IDAHOBIT, 17 May, outside the office of Tbilisi Pride and went on for months. On 7 June, protesters threw paint bombs on the Pride flag hanging on the office's balcony. The attack was filmed by ultra-conservative organiser Guram Palavandishvili. The police classified the incident as "petty hooliganism" and failed to consider it a hate crime. The Ombudsperson established that events were illegal acts by radical groups and demanded effective investigation.

## EDUCATION

The Office of the Public Defender issued a recommendation to the Tbilisi State Medical University to remove textbooks spreading anti-LGBT prejudice and stigma. The University removed the books and is now reviewing others.

In collaboration with the Equality Movement, Ilia State University and Tbilisi State University introduced courses on queer theory, in which 80 students have participated. A conference was held in October.

Local organisation Georgian Democracy Initiative sensitised 100 public schools teachers on LGBTQI issues.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In August and ahead of the autumn elections, the National Democratic Institute recommended politicians to include in their programs the needs of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQI people, and messages about equality.

Between December 2019 and August 2020, the Equality Movement sensitised 150 representatives of different professions on LGBTQI issues.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

IDAHOBIT events were cancelled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, priests drove around Tbilisi in so-called "blessmobiles" [a term used by the media], spraying holy water on pedestrians.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, IN HUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

On 8 October, the European Court of Human Rights delivered its judgment in the Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia case, unanimously ruling that the 2009 police raid and investigation against an LGBT organisation in Tbilisi violated freedom from torture and ill-treatment (Article 3), in conjunction with Article 14. The Court established that the state was responsible for the raid, and that it failed to effectively investigate the abuses. It expressed particular concern about the strip search that activists had to undergo and which was not justified by either the police or the government. It concluded that the sole purpose of the act was to humiliate LGBT activists.

Women's Initiative Support Group (WISG) warned that LGBTQI people still face anti-LGBT harassment by police.

## HEALTH

In 2019, WISG filed five cases to the Ombudsperson on trans people's lack of access to free and quality healthcare. In June 2020, the Ombudsperson called on the Ministry of Health to draft trans healthcare guidelines and to involve trans people and their representative organisations in the process.

The Ministry of Health lowered the blood donation deferral period for men who have sex with men from 10 years to 12 months.

In June, the Equality Movement submitted a proposed amendment to parliament to abolish Art. 131 of the Criminal Code and decriminalise HIV transmission.

## HOUSING

The pandemic had a detrimental impact on the housing situation of LGBTQI people, and particularly trans people.

Due to family rejection, many trans people are unregistered from their family's homes. As a consequence, they either do not have a registered address or the address on their ID card is no longer valid. This made it difficult to access any kind of aid.

Trans people living who lost their daily income were also excluded from aid. The state utilities support during the crisis was only available to those with previous employment in the formal labour market. In March, WISG urged the government to provide rental subsidies, shelter or alternative housing options, as many LGBTQI people were at risk of homelessness.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

On 30 April, Madona Kiparoidze, a trans woman, set herself on fire outside the Tbilisi City Hall to protest the government's failure to support trans people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kiparoidze was arrested by police and taken to hospital, with no life threatening injuries. The entire incident was broadcast live on TV, a concerning violation of media ethics. In a social media post, Sopio Kiladze (see under **Bias-motivated speech**) said trans people should go to the local authorities for help, or contact her. Civil society warned that Kiladze's statements mock the reality of trans people.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In June, the Ombudsperson warned that in lack of any clear guidelines, the medical requirements of legal gender recognition are difficult to meet for trans people; that the

surgery requirement is degrading; that requirements of medical procedures are ad hoc and inconsistent (see under **Health**).

A third Georgian case was submitted to the European Court of Human Rights this year, concerning a trans man who was denied legal gender recognition without proof of surgical interventions.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

WISG and the Equality Movement held trainings for the police and the Prosecutor's Office this year, on anti-LGBT hate crimes and discrimination and victim support.



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