



Iceland

ASYLUM

Civil society urged the government to take into account the vulnerability of LGBTI asylum seekers.

The deportation of an Iranian family with a trans child was cancelled on 17 February, following harsh criticism by civil society organisations and the public. A petition gathered 8,000 signatures calling on the government to show humanity, and a protest was organised by local human rights organisations. The family spent a week in Portugal before asking for asylum in Iceland, which mandated their planned deportation under the Dublin regulation back to Portugal. The father in the family faced persecution in Iran for his political beliefs. The family's child, still a minor, came out as trans in Iceland and the prospect of deportation severely impacted his mental health. His doctor urged the authorities to stall the deportation and provide mental health care to the child. In the end, the family was allowed to stay and got residency.

Pórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir, Chair of the Constitutional and Monitoring Committee, demanded information from the Directorate of Immigration on their policies and procedures with regard to LGBTI asylum seekers, including LGBTI minors. The Directorate has not answered.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In October, a police officer was reported wearing several neo-Nazi and racist symbols on her uniform, stirring wide debate. Some police authorities condemned the incident and clarified that police officers were not allowed to wear such symbols. The police union and the officer concerned both defended her actions.

BODILY INTEGRITY

The designated working group's proposal to ban surgeries on intersex children, but retaining an exception for interventions on people with hypospadias or micropenis, was heavily criticised by civil society organisations, who were previously concerned that the 2019 Gender Autonomy Act did not automatically abolish all medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries.

In October, former Prime Minister Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson, chair of the Centre Party condemned the planned ban on surgeries, sparking firm criticism by civil society.

On 18 December, parliament passed a standalone law regarding bodily integrity for intersex children, banning non-consensual and medically unnecessary surgeries against minors, that

are not necessary for the child's long-term health. This must be unanimously agreed upon by a multidisciplinary team of medical experts and confirmed by a ministerial committee of a child psychologist, a pediatrician, and a human rights expert. Interventions, unless life saving, will be postponed in the meantime. The law was passed with an overwhelming majority. Regrettably, the ban excludes hypospadias and micropenis. A committee must be formed within the next three years to review and strengthen the law.

EDUCATION

Samtökin '78 in collaboration with GLSEN, Columbia University, and the University of Iceland conducted a school well-being survey, finding that a third of students felt unsafe because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and a third had been verbally harassed.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

A new law on "Equal gender rights" was tabled in parliament in October, moving away from the previous wording on equality between a "male and female". The proposal is important as it gives recognition to those registered with a gender marker beyond these two options.

FAMILY

As part of the implementation process of the Gender Autonomy Act, the Children's Law is also being revised to allow for gender-neutral registration for parents.

FOREIGN POLICY

In February, the Icelandic Parliament announced a ban on members of an anti-LGBT Methodist fraction, as a response to travel bans issued by the US.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Reykjavik Pride was held differently from previous years. The organisers invited everyone to join - only, people did not march together, but wherever they wanted to. Some of the other events included discussions on Black Lives Matter, and the ever growing presence of the anti-gender movement in Europe.

HEALTH

In February, the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Landspítali hospital announced that due to budget cuts, their "trans team", as it is colloquially referred to, will end its work. The



mental health unit supports trans and gender non-conforming youth, including by counseling or providing them with hormone blockers. Three mothers were interviewed in Mannlíf about the situation:

“There are a lot of children racing against time due to puberty. Some parents have had to look after their children due to depression, eating disorders or the risk of suicide.” - María Gunnars, mother of a trans girl to Mannlíf

The announcement explained that the 48 young people already cared for will have access to a limited set of services through the hospital's outpatient department, and others will have to wait in the queue. Local organisations Trans friends, parents and guardians of trans youth and trans children, Trans Iceland, and Samtökin '78 launched a petition and handed over the signatures to the hospital director and the Minister of Health on 25 February, urging the government to provide all essential financial resources for the team to resume its work. No further developments have taken place.

Samtökin '78 reported a 40% increase in the number of young people seeking counseling and mental health support this year, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Open houses, which have previously provided a lot of support, have had difficulty staying open due to the pandemic.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 16 December, parliament amended several laws to comply with the 2019 Gender Autonomy Act, which opened up the option of choosing a legal gender that is gender-neutral. Legal recognition for non-binary people will be available from 6 January 2021 onwards.

On 16 December, the parliament voted to lower the age limit from 18 to 15 regarding access to legal gender recognition that is based solely on self-determination. Those under 15 will need consent of their legal guardians, but in lack of that, can secure permission from an expert committee on legal gender recognition.



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