



# GEORGIA

## ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a devastating impact on LGBTQI and trans communities. Women's Initiative Support Group's (WISG) 2021 survey, to be published in 2022, found that almost half of LGBTQI respondents experienced food shortages during the pandemic.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech by religious and political leaders remained a severe issue. For instance, the Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, Tea, Tsulukiani made homophobic statements in March and members of the ruling party made anti-LGBT statements in June.

Preceding the Tbilisi Pride (March of Dignity), planned for July, government representatives and religious leaders made countless anti-LGBT statements. On the eve of the Tbilisi Pride March on 5 July, Prime Minister Gharibashvili stated: "95% of our population is against holding a propaganda parade, friends, we must all obey, this is the opinion of the absolute majority of our population". Civil society accused the government of contributing to the violent attacks the next day (see below) and the complete lack of police protection, investigation, and prosecution.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Countless hate crimes took place again this year, many targeting journalists and human rights defenders (see under **Human Rights Defenders**).

Several LGBT people were physically assaulted. Trans women were attacked in June and in September. In April, a trans minor was verbally and physically assaulted - the police filed the case as 'gang violence' and the prosecution is ongoing. Two gay men were also verbally assaulted and received death threats - the police filed the case under 'threat', and established the bias motif. Several lesbian women and couples were assaulted or threatened in April. In one case, the police are treating the case as hooliganism. Civil society demanding more action from the Ministry of Interior.

In the lead-up to the Pride march in July, civil society called on the Ministry of Interior and the government to protect the participants and organisers. A day before the planned march, violent mobs started roaming Tbilisi, encouraged by political leaders. The headquarters of Tbilisi Pride was attacked on 5 July; rainbow flags were

torn apart and burnt. Around 50 journalists who were reporting on the anti-LGBT protests were also beaten up and several were hospitalised. The anti-LGBT mobs celebrated in the streets after Tbilisi Pride cancelled the event. Other offices of LGBT and human rights NGOs were also vandalised. The police failed to provide protection.

On 6 July, hundreds showed up to protest against anti-LGBT violence and the failure of the police. On 11 July, thousands came to the streets again and called for the resignation of the Prime Minister after journalist Alexander Lashkarava was found dead in his home. Lashkarava was one of those attacked by mobs the previous week. He was operated on and released on 8 July. The police are investigating the cause of his death. The Prime Minister released a statement on 12 July denying any responsibility for the violent attacks and Lashkarava's death, which was followed by firm civil society criticism. WISG published a detailed analysis of the July events. Seven NGOs jointly demanding government accountability.

In November, a trans woman was stabbed and killed and another trans woman was stabbed. The Prosecutor's Office established transphobic bias in both cases and prosecution is ongoing.

## EDUCATION

In May, the Ombudsperson issued a general recommendation for the Ministry of Education to ensure trans women's equal access to university studies without discrimination during application procedures.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

During its third Universal Periodic Review, Georgia received 23 recommendations on SOGIESC issues in April and accepted 22, on discrimination, hate crimes, hate speech, and freedom of assembly.

On 28 April, the Venice Commission urged Georgia to ensure that the appointment process of new Supreme Court judges complies with international human rights law standards and to re-announce the competition. Disregarding the recommendations, the process, which has lacked transparency, impartiality, and independence, continued without changes. On 17 June, nine new judges were appointed.

Reports were leaked in September suggesting that civil society continues being surveilled and that the state has gathered information about people's identities and



contact information. Civil society demanded a stop to intimidation.

In a standalone chapter, the Ombudsperson's [annual report](#) highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the LGBTQI community and lack of adequate response from the state; including, issues related to freedom of assembly, legal gender recognition, hate crimes and discrimination; and the growing anti-gender movement. The Ombudsperson urged the government to introduce LGR regulations and address socio-economic marginalisation. The Ombudsperson [faced](#) anti-LGBT backlash for this work.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In December, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in the *WISG and Others v. Georgia* case that Georgia [violated](#) its obligations by failing to protect peaceful demonstrators at the 2013 IDAHOBIT events from anti-LGBT violence, and by failing to conduct an adequate investigation and discriminated against LGBT people.

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

To implement the 2020 ECtHR judgement in the case of *Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia*, an investigation was ongoing this year under Article 333 of the Criminal Code on the abuse of official powers. The victim's representatives launched a request with the Prosecutor's Office that the investigation cover Article 151 (threats), Article 156 (persecution) and Article 144 (torture).

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The government maintained strict curfew rules despite civil society's [calls](#) that they be [eased](#).

## HEALTH

The Equality Movement published a [resource](#) for people living with HIV.

WISG made several resources available in Georgian this year, including on psychological support for [trans and gender non-conforming](#) and [LGB](#) people.

The process of introducing trans healthcare guidelines, based on the Ombudsperson's 2020 [recommendations](#), is stalled.

## HOUSING

The pandemic continued having a detrimental impact on the housing situation of LGBTQI and particularly trans people. Despite civil society's [calls](#) in 2020, the government has not offered rental subsidies, shelter, or alternative housing options.

WISG's study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, to be published in 2022, found that 13% of the respondents had housing difficulties and over a third had trouble paying rent.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The offices of Tbilisi's Pride and other NGOs were [vandalised](#) in July. Some decided to temporarily [close](#) in fear for their safety. The Council of Europe [condemned](#) the violence.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 25 March, the first trans person in Georgia was [granted](#) legal gender recognition (LGR) by the Tbilisi Civil Registry Service. The applicant showed proof of surgery when applying for LGR in 2020. Georgia has no legal or administrative procedures in place for LGR and several trans people had turned to the ECtHR to have this remedied.

In October, the request of an intersex woman for LGR was denied by the authorities, who requested proof of surgery. The woman filed an appeal.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The documentary '[Midnight Frontier](#)' about Tbilisi's techno scene and clubs for LGBTQI people was [released](#) in October. Several art projects (see [here](#) and [here](#)) and [exhibitions](#) took place this year.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

WISG held trainings for the police, the Prosecutor's Office, the State Care Agency and legal service providers this year on anti-LGBT hate crimes, discrimination, and victim support.

## PUBLIC OPINION

WISG conducted a study on societal attitudes towards LGBTQI persons, to be published in 2022, highlighting the



detrimental impact of institutional bias and oppression, the role of the state in anti-LGBTQ aggression, and the positive impact on education and sensitisation.



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