



Annual Review

of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Albania covering the period of January to December 2018

Albania

Asylum

Due to homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, a growing number of Albanian LGBTI people, especially youth, have asked NGOs for help and information about seeking asylum in EU countries, the US, and Canada.

Bias-motivated speech

In March, Aleanca LGBT conducted 5 educational and awareness-raising meetings with students of XI and XII grades from Tirana high schools (see more under **Education**). Several right wing and centre-left MPs harshly criticized these meetings.

Hate speech and discriminatory language also continue to be a problem in the media, especially online. Five hate speech cases were registered and two complaints were submitted to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) on grounds of SOGI this year. Despite awareness campaigns, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia remain widespread.

Bias-motivated violence

During 2018, Aleanca documented 45 cases of hate crimes against LGBT people. None of these cases were prosecuted by the police. In one reported case, the police officer requested the victim, a trans woman, to withdraw the complaint, assuring her that the officer would ensure her safety. Two weeks later she was attacked by the same perpetrator and hospitalised.

Most victims have difficulty accessing the justice system. The only way to ensure action from the police is to go to the station accompanied by a member of Aleanca's staff.

Bodily integrity

In May, UNDP published a four-country [study](#) on intersex issues in the region. The report noted that intersex people in Albania are invisible in society and unprotected by legislation. It recommended educating medical professionals, recognising sex characteristics in anti-discrimination legislation, and increasing the capacity of NGOs and media to work on human rights of intersex people.

Education

In 2018, an increased number of young LGBT people left schools due to bullying, as documented by NGOs. On 31 May, PINK Embassy published a report "[Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards LGBTI persons in public high schools in Albania](#)", based on 200 interviews conducted between 2016-2017 in six cities. 66% of teachers stated they were silent when witnessing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in their classrooms. More than two-thirds said they would not support LGBTI students and almost 10% said they would not welcome them in their class.

As part of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020, the Ministry of Education, the Municipality of Tirana and Aleanca LGBT [began](#) a series of workshops in public schools in March. The awareness raising campaign aimed to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation and break down common gender stereotypes. This was met with a strong [backlash](#) in the media and social media, containing overt hate speech, including from public officials. MP Luciano Boçi (Democratic Party of Albania, PD; centre-right) called it "revolting". A well-known TV programme Al Pazar then mocked the initiative.

The Ministry of Education initially denied knowledge of the activities. Later it acknowledged that activities were sanctioned by the ministry, but only as a pilot project. Aleanca LGBT sent a public letter to the Prime Minister asking him to condemn the hate speech, however, no reaction was received. Disappointingly, there was also no official statement from the Ombudsman and the CPD-two of the most important human rights institutions. As a result the Ministry of Education decided to stop the anti-bullying activities in schools.

Equality and non-discrimination

On 17 May, PINK Embassy published findings of the first "[Monitoring Report of the National Action Plan for LGBTI people in Albania](#)". Drafted jointly by public institutions, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and LGBTI organisations, the report concludes that despite positive steps, Albania still has a long way to go to achieve LGBTI equality.

The Law on social housing, approved in 2018, recognises LGBT people among vulnerable groups that can profit from social housing programs. The LGBTI Shelter opened in 2014, which is recognised as providing a social service, and still receives no financial support from the Albanian government.

Family

Albania failed to take any steps this year to amend the Family Code regarding cohabitation of LGBTI persons, despite the draft law having been prepared in 2013. In a joint letter in May, 10 NGOs called on the government to amend the Family Code and eliminate legal barriers that are an obstacle to marriage equality. The Constitution does not limit marriage to a union between a man and a woman, but the Family Code does. Erinda Ballanca, the People's Advocate (Ombudsperson) expressed her support for marriage equality in April.

Freedom of assembly

In 2018, the (P)Ride was attended by a record 400 people, cooperation with the police went smoothly and no incidents were reported.

Freedom of expression

PINK Embassy and Human Rights House in Albania organised the 9th week-long Festival of Diversity for the human rights of LGBTI people. On 17 May, Tirana raised the rainbow flag on its main square, for the third year in a row. The action was supported by the Tirana Municipality, the Council of Europe, and the EU.

Health

NGO Aleanca LGBT continued its program of HIV and STI testing this year. Trans healthcare services continue to be lacking in the country. Trans people also face discrimination in general healthcare settings. NGO staff members of Aleanca often accompany trans people to prevent discriminatory treatment.

Legal gender recognition

Trans people are still unable to change their name and gender marker. A draft law on gender recognition was presented to the government in 2013 but nothing has been done on the part of the government. On 16 May, PINK Embassy re-submitted the draft to Parliament asking them to consider it.

Participation in public, cultural and political life

During the backlash against anti-bullying activities carried out in schools (see more above in Education), representatives from LGBTI civil society were invited to and participated in numerous interviews across different media outlets.

Civil society is included in consultations and working groups relating to the human rights of LGBTI people, however, further efforts are needed to ensure this involvement is meaningful.

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