

BELARUS

It should be noted that access to information about developments in the country has been increasingly difficult, as a result of the increasing repression against civil society. There is no public information available on LGBTI issues. Activists and organisations working for equality are facing significant risks in their safety and freedom, and there are few currently in the country, which contributes to making access to information more difficult.

ASYLUM

Thousands continued leaving the country this year to seek asylum. Some resources were published to support LGBT people fleeing with information on how to avoid harassment and detention at the border.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In October, the Secretary General of the local Red Cross Dmytro Shevtsov, said on TV that LGBT people are sick and need to be treated, that same-sex relationships are a mental illness, and that non-traditional values are promoted through cartoons and teen films.

In May, Journalists for Tolerance (J4T) published its periodic report monitoring hate speech in 2021 in Belarus. J4T found that every fourth piece of media coverage on LGBTQ+ people amounted to hate speech.

Pro-government propagandists regularly called for the persecution of LGBT activists and the closure of LGBT organisations.

The Secretary General of the Belarusian Red Cross Society, Dmitry Shevtsov made several homophobic statements during a program on the STV channel.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

At least ten trans people left the country due to discrimination and repression.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Police officers detained stylist Igor Korolik appearing in a video in support of Ukraine. Then, the security forces showed a video of Korolik, in which he forcibly

asked for forgiveness from the “Slav brothers” and admitted to have “supported the fascist ideology.” In the 17-second clip, Korolik self-deprecated and came out as homosexual, using in criminal jargon.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION, AND EXPRESSION

Since the historic protests against the government in 2020, the government has continued its brutal crackdown on protesters, journalists, and civil society, through unlawful arrest, detention, violence, and ill-treatment. (see more under *Human Rights Defenders*)

Freedom of expression, assembly and association continued to be extremely restricted. Following the 2021 laws, which made it even easier for the authorities to control and prosecute journalists and civil society, a new death penalty law was adopted in May to punish “attempts to carry out acts of terrorism”.

Hundreds of civil society organisations have been dissolved since 2020, or are currently being dissolved, including several that work on LGBT issues. In February, MAKEOUT was notified that it would also be dissolved. Several websites were blocked this year, including CSOs.

The Communist Party of Belarus wants to liquidate the nightclub “Burlesque” because “its values are not compatible with the traditional values of the Belarusian people”.

On 29 December, the Chairwoman of the Council of the Republic of Belarus announced that Belarus might introduce an LGBT ‘propaganda’ legislation similar to that in Russia.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

(see more under *Freedom of Assembly, Association, and Expression*)

Belarus continued making headlines due to the brutal government crackdown waged against civil society and the opposition. Several journalists, political activists, and others stood trial and received harsh prison sentences this year (see here, here, here, and here). Thousands continue to be detained and



subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Over the past year, numerous reports* were made on the fact that if the detained activists were found out to be LGBTI (or perceived as such) they were subjected to additional or sexualised violence.

Civil society organisations working on LGBT issues continued being harassed by the authorities. Some initiatives had to close down and several activists fled the country.

Ales Bialiatski, detained political activist, was one of the awardees of the Nobel Peace Prize this year but was not allowed to issue his acceptance speech.

PUBLIC OPINION

Olga Bondareva, a pro-government supporter from Grodno, succeeded in replacing a billboard advertising headphones in the centre of Minsk. Bondareva perceived the model as trans and that there was 'LGBT propaganda' on the ad. A day after the complaint, the billboard was replaced by social advertising.

**Some of the information about Belarus was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous. These accounts were not publicly shared online or otherwise.*

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