



Belarus



Homophobia and transphobia remained widespread in Belarus, as captured by the President of Belarus' statement: "it is better to be a dictator than gay." During the year, attempts were made by conservative politicians and religious leaders to further limit the rights of LGBTI people through legislative proposals ranging from: (i) the criminalisation of homosexuality; to a (ii) ban on gender reassignment procedures; and (iii) a ban on artificial procreation techniques.

Bias motivated speech

- In March, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, said “it is better to be a dictator than gay”. The remark was made after the EU leaders called for new measures to pressure Lukashenko over human rights abuses. Lukashenko’s comments were seen as an attack on Germany’s openly gay Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. A similar incident occurred in 2010 during a meeting with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Poland and Germany when the Belarus President had told Mr Westerwelle to lead a normal life.
- In May, Dmitry Kariakin, the singer of the band Lightsound that represented Belarus at the Eurovision Song Contest stated that he is against ‘the propaganda of homosexuality’. He asked, “I was silent during the Eurovision Song Contest, but now I will not be - I state openly that I am against the propaganda of homosexuality. Who is with me?” The singer clarified his being against any ‘promotion of homosexuality’ through cinema, music, LGBT Parades and social behaviour.

Bias motivated violence

- In April, activists of the opposition youth organisation Youth Front attacked a group of LGBTI activists marching with rainbow flags during the Chernobyl Way march for democracy. The LGBTI activists were eventually forced to go to the back of the march after their flags were grabbed by members of Youth Front.
- In July, a group of men attacked a young gay man in Minsk. Four of them were identified by the police and acknowledged that they attacked him because he is gay. In September, only one of the assailants was prosecuted and sentenced to pay a fine by the Frunzenski Borough Court of Minsk. With the support of GayBelarus and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the victim initiated criminal proceedings against the other identified suspects.

Criminalisation

- In November, Dr Zianon Pazniak, a former candidate in the presidential elections and the leader of the Belarusian People’s Front, a conservative Christian party,

was interviewed by InterPolit on gay people’s rights and said that in a democratic Belarus there should be legislation that criminalises what is against nature.

Education

- In September, a 17-year-old gay student was attacked by classmates in one of the professional schools of Brest. A year prior to that, the victim had disclosed his sexual orientation to a female friend. After the incident, the victim was hospitalised and diagnosed with an open fracture of the nose. He did not lodge a complaint as he did not want to disclose his sexual orientation to the police.

Freedom of assembly

- In March, LGBTI activists participated in the National Day march, carrying rainbow flags, without objection from the march organisers.
- In May, authorities denied permission for the holding of public LGBTI events planned for the *International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia* (IDAHO) citing technical issues and repair work near the proposed locations as reasons for denying the protest. These included a picket in front of the Belarusian People’s Front headquarters, as well as pickets of LGBTI activists on Nyamiha and Bangalore Squares. However, activists did organise a series of educational and social events in commemoration of IDAHO.
- In October, the 8th Minsk Gay Pride took place. Permission was not granted for a Pride Parade but 15 events took place throughout the city. Among them was an international interdisciplinary scientific conference, *Queer Sexuality: Power, Policy and Practice*, which gathered experts from Belarus, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Sweden, Poland, Latvia and other European countries. The events culminated in LGBTI activists riding through the centre of Minsk in a streetcar on 11 October, *Coming Out Day*.
- In October, the Minsk City Council refused to allow a public protest in front of the Ukrainian Embassy in Belarus. An activist from Amnesty International in Belarus had applied to the Minsk City Executive Committee for permission to picket the Embassy of Ukraine under the

slogan “No law #8711”, which refers to the bill intended to ban ‘homosexual propaganda’ in Ukraine.

Sexual and reproductive rights

- In November, the Belarusian Orthodox Church and the Minsk-Mogilev Roman Catholic Archdiocese proposed a number of amendments to the Belarusian law *On Healthcare* (enacted on 18 June 1993, No 2435-XII). Amendments were proposed to ban abortion, surrogacy, and sperm donation for IVF unless destined for a married heterosexual couple, as well as gender reassignment procedures for trans people. They would also introduce a right for healthcare workers to refuse a medical intervention on religious, ethical and moral grounds.

Member organisations of ILGA-Europe

Gay.by – Gay Alliance Belarus
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