



NATIONAL REPORT

on Violations of the Rights
of LGBT People in Armenia

2024



Publication prepared by: Masiumova Nadira



The publication was prepared by ECOM and published as part of the Regional project «Sustainability of services for key populations in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia» (SoS_project 2.0), implemented by a consortium of organizations led by the Alliance for Public Health in partnership with the CO «100% Life», with financial support from the Global Fund.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and may not reflect the views of the consortium organizations as well as the Global Fund.

The Global Fund was not involved in agreeing and approving either the material itself or the possible conclusions from it.



CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	3
	LEGISLATION	3
	ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION	3
	LEGISLATION IN THE FIELD OF HIV	4
	LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION	4
	ACCESS TO HUMAN RIGHTS	5
	RIGHT TO HEALTH	5
	RIGHT TO WORK	6
	RIGHT TO HOUSING	6
	RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM TORTURE	7
	RIGHT TO PRIVACY	7
	RIGHT TO LEGAL PROTECTION	8
	HATE CRIMES	9
	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	10
	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARMENIA	10
	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	11
	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY	11



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CC RA Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia

EECA Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Global Fund Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

HC Hate crimes

HIV Human immunodeficiency virus

LGBT Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people

MSM Men who have sex with men

NGO Non-governmental organization

PLH People living with HIV

Queer Umbrella term for an LGBT person

RA Republic of Armenia

SOGI Sexual orientation and gender identity



METHODOLOGY FOR COLLECTING CASES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

The basis for this national report included monitoring cases of human rights violations, collected using tools provided by ECOM, as well as a brief analysis of the legal environment. The following research methods were used as part of monitoring: an analysis of documented cases and an analysis of thematic materials from open sources.

The purpose of collecting information is to identify cases of human rights violations faced by LGBT people. As a result of the analysis, the main causes of violations and discrimination were identified, and quantitative data was obtained. Conclusions and recommendations were developed based on this data.



INTRODUCTION

LGBT people continue to experience hate crimes. Fear of discrimination and humiliation from publicly disclosing their sexual orientation or gender identity prevents many representatives of the LGBT community from reporting such crimes¹. Discrimination against LGBT people by state institutions remains a common phenomenon in Armenia².

Gay and bisexual men and trans people may be declared unfit for military service under a provision on “Severe uncompensated behavioral disorders, decompensated or compensated disorders of personality and sexual identity, preferences, development and orientation,” if they disclose their SOGI during conscription.

According to monitoring data for 2024, such a diagnosis may subsequently subject them to discrimination when seeking medical services. This information is confirmed by data from national LGBT organizations³.



LEGISLATION

The Constitution of the Republic of Armenia ensures protection of human rights, and ratified international documents have legal supremacy over codes and other normative and legal acts⁴.



ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION

Armenia has not adopted anti-discrimination legislation, despite numerous recommendations from the international community to do so. A draft bill was presented in 2018, but it did not include SOGI as characteristics protected from discrimination.

In Armenia, crimes committed on the basis of hatred, intolerance, or enmity, which was provoked by racial, national, ethnic, or social origin, religion, political or other views, or other circumstances of a personal or public nature are considered aggravating circumstances. Although the list of aggravating circumstances remains open-ended and can include SOGI, practice shows that neither law enforcement agencies nor judges use this provision in HC cases against LGBT people.

¹ World Report 2024. Human Rights Watch. — URL: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/armenia>

² Amnesty International. Armenia. 2023. — URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/armenia/report-armenia/>

³ NGNGO “Armed” system reflects information on a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity. 2022. — URL: <https://ngngo.net/en/2022/06/22/armed-system/>

⁴ Constitution of the RA, article 5, paragraph 3

The country has not adopted necessary legislation on hate speech. This means that the LGBT community does not have the necessary protection against hate campaigns.

In 2020, as part of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, Armenia received a number of recommendations on enacting an anti-discrimination law and a provision on HC and hate speech, including SOGI as protected characteristics. Armenia accepted these recommendations. In 2022, the Criminal Code of Armenia was amended; incitement to hatred was criminalized.



LEGISLATION IN THE FIELD OF HIV

Article 14 of the Law of the RA “on Prevention of the Disease Caused by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus” guarantees non-discriminatory treatment of people living with HIV. The law ensures the right to receive medical assistance and services, and also outlines the duties and responsibilities of health care professionals.

The intentional transmission of HIV is criminalized in Armenia⁵. It also establishes criminal liability for HIV transmission due to negligence⁶.



LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The classification of “transsexualism” as a mental disorder in accordance with the 10th International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) in Armenia reflects a broader problem of institutional stigma that limits trans people’s access to human rights. This classification not only perpetuates harmful stereotypes, but also reinforces discriminatory practices in healthcare, legal systems, and social institutions.

There is a shortage of qualified endocrinologists in Armenia who can provide specialized care to trans people. The lack of availability of special feminizing drugs in Armenia exacerbates the difficulties faced by trans people. The fact that all existing feminizing drugs are contraceptives highlights the systemic disregard for the health needs of the community. This often leads to unsafe practices as people resort to alternative means, including self-treatment.

The lack of legal gender recognition in Armenia creates a significant barrier to changing identification documents. In order to make any changes to passport data, a person must provide documents justifying the need for correction. Authorities require certificates of “sex reassignment surgery”. However, obtaining such documents is difficult, since the surgery is not separately included in the list of medical services available in the country. In practice, such surgeries are officially registered as “corrections” of bodily deformities.

⁵ Criminal Code of the RA, Article 177.

⁶ Id., Article 178.



ACCESS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

The LGBT community faces systemic barriers to accessing human rights. In 2024, ECOM registered 78 cases of human rights violations. The main violators identified included law enforcement officers, doctors and private individuals. Groups of law enforcement officers displayed particular cruelty and hatred during attacks, including the use of bladed weapons and death threats.

Monitoring human rights violations highlights the key issue of intersectionality. For instance, queer women face double stigma based on their SOGI and gender (two cases of corrective rape were documents); while queer migrants are perceived as carriers of “foreign, pro-Western ideology.” Trans people remain especially vulnerable.



RIGHT TO HEALTH

In six registered cases, violators of human rights were medical workers. In half of the cases, medical workers refused to provide services to LGBT people because of their SOGI or HIV status. In one case, the victim was hospitalized with a knife wound, but the doctor continued to refuse to provide the necessary assistance and used hate speech.



The patient went to a plastic surgeon. She paid for pre-operative examinations and underwent testing. She [the patient] was diagnosed with HIV, which served as the basis for the refusal of the operation. The HIV test was taken from her without consent. The doctor alleged that he told her about all the tests and also accused the patient of hiding her status.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.

There is a trend of violence and discrimination against LGBT patients with mental disorders or special needs in Armenia. Doctors use the vulnerable position of patients to express aggression, intolerance and hatred. In 2024, two cases were documented in which psychiatrists expressed homophobia and transphobia and tried to “correct” the SOGI of the victims.



A hospital patient was insulted, humiliated and beaten by orderlies and the doctor himself during inpatient treatment. The aggressive treatment on the part of hospital staff was due to his SOGI.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



RIGHT TO WORK

LGBT people face discrimination in the workplace when their SOGI is revealed to their employer or colleagues. This leads to bullying and unlawful dismissals. The lack of anti-discrimination legislation makes the situation worse by limiting the ability of victims to seek protection.

Due to the high level of stigma and discrimination against LGBT people, the queer community is forced to find work in the informal economy. Trans people remain especially vulnerable due to discrepancies between their appearance and the sex indicated in their identification documents.

LGBT sex workers are subject to double persecution by law enforcement agencies and certain homophobic and transphobic groups. However, they are very limited in terms of protection of their rights.



The victim was a sex worker. He met a man who offered to send him rich clients for a fee. He agreed. They had no problems for a month, but then the man stopped sending money to the victim for services rendered. The man began to demand that the victim work for free, and threatened to publish their correspondence.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



A trans sex worker was abducted by assailants posing as clients, beaten, sexually assaulted, and forced to call other trans sex workers under the pretext of providing sex services.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



RIGHT TO HOUSING

The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation negatively affects LGBT people's access to housing. Landlords may refuse to rent housing based on the victims' SOGI, or rent the apartment at an inflated price. Violators often include the neighbors of victims, their family members, and realtors.

Young LGBT people are being kicked out of their homes because of their SOGI. Therefore, there is an urgent need for shelters. In 2024, ECOM registered four cases of violations of housing rights.



The victim was approached by a neighbor with two men. They threatened her with a knife and demanded that she move. Subsequently, all the men in the building gathered and beat her up.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



After finding out about the gender identity of the victim, the owner of the apartment began to create problems: he visited the apartment every day under the pretext of carrying out checks and made previously unspecified demands. When the victim decided to leave the apartment, the landlord refused to return the deposit.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM TORTURE

Freedom from torture is an absolute right of every person without exception. However, the LGBT community in Armenia continues to face torture, and law enforcement officers operate with a sense of impunity. The police justify the abuse of trans people with the “need to establish their identity”, which once again proves that Armenia should have a simple procedure for legal gender recognition, as well as an examination procedure based on respect and non-discrimination.



The victim was stopped by police officers. They asked for his documents. His ID photo was taken before his transition. They [the police] took him to the police station to verify his identity. They mocked him, joked about him, and forced him to undress.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Discriminatory practices related to the diagnosis of “homosexuality” and “transsexualism” continue to take place in Armenia. This diagnosis is registered in the unified electronic health information system and is indicated when a person seeks medical services. This leads to stigma and discrimination on the part of health workers.

Registration of SOGI-related data in the system violates the rights of LGBT people to privacy, and creates additional barriers. This system leads to the forced disclosure of personal data.



The victim logged into the electronic health system and saw a record of his visit to a psychiatrist. The reason for the visit (homosexuality) was recorded. The victim’s family members saw this record and kicked him out of the house.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



RIGHT TO LEGAL PROTECTION

Armenia has a strong civil society that supports LGBT victims to access the right to legal protection. In 2024, organizations conducted strategic litigation and provided legal counseling.

Law enforcement agencies are more likely to investigate cases when the victim has official representatives (lawyers and public defenders). This happened in the case of a “fake date”. The victim filed a statement, which was subsequently accepted. As a result of the support offered in this case, an investigation was launched and the police identified the perpetrators. In another case, when a victim sought assistance on his own, he faced hate speech and harassment. The police officer refused to issue a referral for a forensic medical examination.

Online hate speech and the sharing of personal data via Telegram channels are not investigated properly. Such actions are considered cybercrimes, and law enforcement agencies are often reluctant to investigate such cases, since they cannot find the authors of the channels.



Telegram has a channel that spreads hatred against LGBT people. An intimate video of a trans woman was posted on it, accompanied by hate speech.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.

In addition to online crimes, LGBT people have limited access to legal protection in cases where the perpetrators are family members, police officers, or military personnel. LGBT people may be reluctant to file complaints against their loved ones, and when they do, police officers often refuse to take complaints and persuade victims to resolve “family issues” in other ways.

In cases where the perpetrators are law enforcement officers, LGBT people may be afraid to seek protection from the institution whose employees violated their rights. The same applies to the army.

ECOM documented seven cases, in which representatives of the army committed human rights violations against LGBT people. Often this includes the disclosure of victims’ SOGI, hate speech, refusal to provide them with a military ID, and bullying.



A trans woman was called in to the military registration and enlistment office. An officer took her to a separate room and locked the door. He asked questions about her gender identity and sexual life. The officers passed her case back and forth. Another officer repeatedly invited her to a separate room and suggested that she “be with him” to ensure her safety at the military registration and enlistment office.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



The victim disclosed his sexual orientation to the military registration and enlistment office. According to the established procedure, he was supposed to be sent to a psychiatric hospital for examination. The head of the military registration and enlistment office called the victim's home and informed his relatives about his sexual orientation.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



HATE CRIMES

In 2024, ECOM documented a high number of hate crimes against LGBT people. These attacks were brutal and inhumane. Often, the perpetrators posed as queer people, found LGBT people online, and offered to meet them. In 2024, eight cases of “fake dates” were documented. The same groups of people were responsible for several cases.



The victim met the attacker online. They agreed to meet. There were several attackers, who stabbed the victim.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.

The hate crimes included four reports of rape. There was one case involving a gay man, two cases of corrective rape, in which the victims were lesbians, and one rape of a trans woman sex worker. Victims filed complaints in two of the cases, but one of them faced discrimination and harassment.



The victim was raped by her acquaintance, who knew about her sexual orientation. According to the attacker, he did it so that “she would have normal relationships with men.” She contacted law enforcement agencies, they bullied her, and delayed calling for a forensic medical examination.

ECOM monitoring, 2024.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Armenia needs to begin consideration of issues related to expanding the legislation on hate crimes and directly include SOGI as protected characteristics – in accordance with recommendations previously adopted under Universal Periodic Review.

ECOM has demonstrated that HC are one of the most common human rights violations faced by LGBT people. However, these cases are not properly registered and representatives of the LGBT community do not always have access to legal protection.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARMENIA

- ✓ Remove the diagnoses of “transsexualism” and “homosexuality” as they are discriminatory, and create an alternative mechanism for exemption from military service based on the protection of personal data;
- ✓ Adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law prohibiting all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of SOGI, and create an effective mechanism for investigating cases of discrimination;
- ✓ Adopt a law on hate crimes and include SOGI as protected characteristics;
- ✓ Document and maintain statistics on hate crimes in the RA, including crimes committed on the basis of a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity;
- ✓ Ensure access to justice for victims of hate crimes, in particular by providing effective remedies that eliminate the risk of double victimization, ensure the safety of the individual and establish comprehensive mechanisms for redress;
- ✓ Prohibit hate speech on the basis of SOGI;
- ✓ Adopt a simple procedure for changing one’s gender marker;
- ✓ Conduct fair investigations of cyber-crimes against LGBT people;



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- ✓ Monitor violations of the human rights of LGBT people;
- ✓ Support local organizations and community-based initiatives.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- ✓ Develop a safe space for interaction and dialogue;
- ✓ Provide legal assistance and protection to victims in connection with their legal cases;
- ✓ Document cases of human rights violations against LGBT people;
- ✓ Support the activities of shelters for LGBT people.

