

**COUNTRIES
OF CENTRAL
ASIA**

—

**RAPID
BACKSLIDING
OF DEMOCRACY**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Despite some global progress in human rights, Central Asia remains a region where there are no mechanisms at the legislative level to protect the human rights of the LGBT community in countries. In 2023-2024, countries in the region have seen a consistent deterioration in the human rights situation, repression of human rights defenders, and a significant democratic backsliding. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, where the political situation is characterized by authoritarianism and traditionalism, this backsliding has an extremely negative impact on LGBT people.

The purpose of this report is to analyze the current situation in the countries of Central Asia, where ECOM is able to collect primary data¹. ***The report covers the following:***

- analysis of key legislative changes;
- position of countries in the region in human rights ratings;
- review of public sentiments and publications in the media;
- position of governments;
- information on the work of international organizations and donors in the region, and their (non-)support for LGBT people;
- description of cases of pressure on human rights organizations and persecution of activists.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for international donors, global organizations, and regional partners to support the LGBT community and strengthen their voices, both within the region of Central Asia and globally.

METHODOLOGY

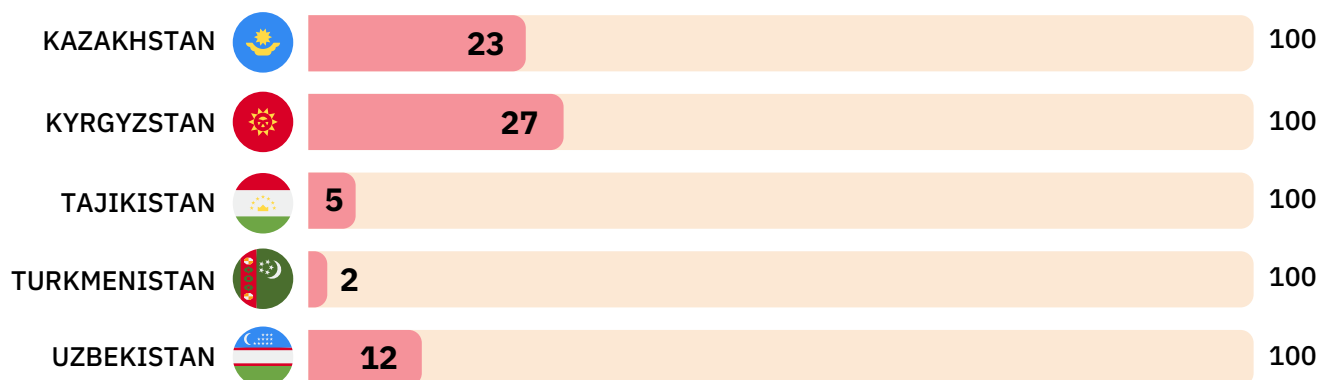
The following sources were used in the preparation of this report:

- ECOM's national and regional [reports](#) from previous years;
- data from shadow reports submitted to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and other UN mechanisms;
- international ratings such as Freedom House, State Department Human Rights Reports, Transparency International;
- publications and investigations in local and international media;
- cases illustrating rights violations are taken from the monitoring and documentation of LGBT rights violations carried out by ECOM.

¹ In Turkmenistan, due to the complete isolation of the country, there is no way to monitor and assess the actual human rights situation, but the rare news from this country reflects an extremely alarming situation. See, e.g., Human Rights Watch's 2023 [report](#) on the human rights situation.

2. INTERNATIONAL RATINGS AND INDICES

[Freedom House](#) rates all countries in the region as “not free”. For example, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan maintain tight control over civil society.

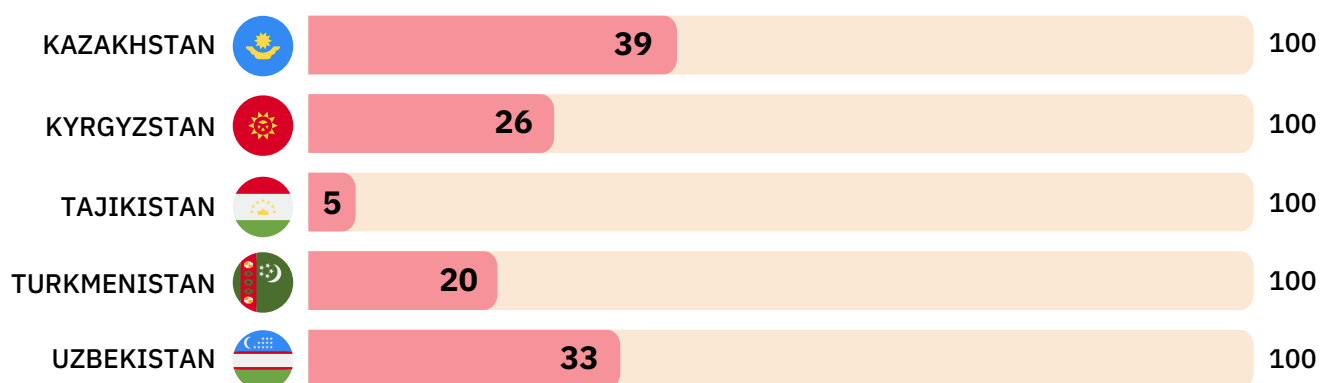


The rating is out of 100 possible points; the higher the rating, the freer the country.

Lack of legal protection and discrimination based on sexual orientation make LGBT people one of the most vulnerable groups in Uzbekistan. They cannot openly express their identity for fear of reprisals.

(Kazakhstan, 2023, Freedom House report).

In [Transparency International's rating](#), all countries occupy low positions in terms of corruption, which negatively affects access to justice for LGBT communities. Ongoing monitoring in 4 out of 5 countries shows a direct correlation between high levels of corruption and violations of LGBT rights by government officials, primarily law enforcement agencies.

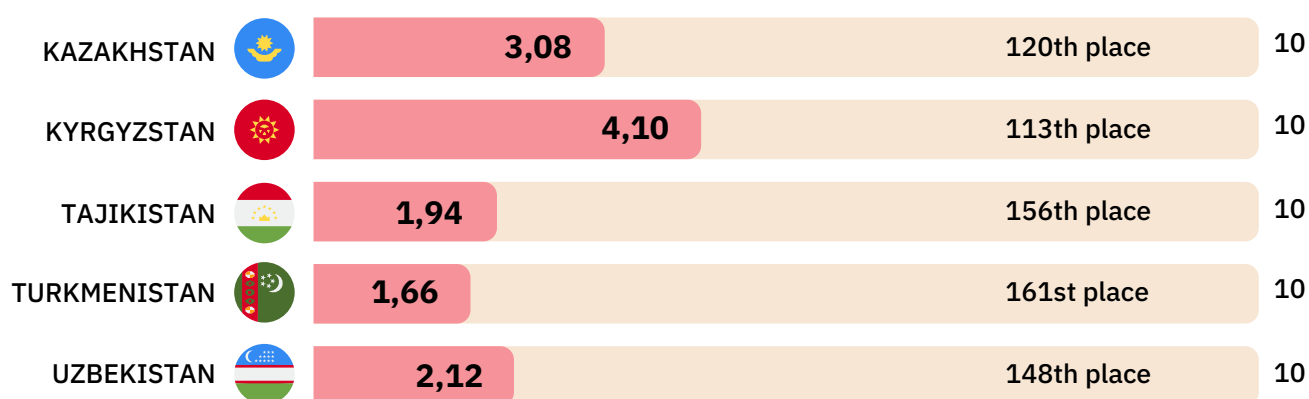


The ranking is out of a possible 100 points, where the higher the rating, the lower the level of corruption. Over the past two years, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have dropped in the ranking by several points.

In just four years, Kyrgyzstan (26) has gone from being a bastion of democracy with a vibrant civil society to a consolidated authoritarian regime that uses the judiciary to persecute critics. This has led to rising levels of corruption, as evidenced by a five-point drop in the country's Corruption Perceptions Index since 2020.

(2023 [Overview](#) of regression in the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Transparency International).

The Economist Intelligence Unit's [Democracy Index](#) rates 4 out of 5 countries in the Central Asia region as authoritarian regimes, with only Kyrgyzstan scoring slightly higher. According to the methodology of this rating, the country is rated as a «hybrid regime».



Of the 167 possible spots in this ranking, the higher a country's score, the higher its level of democracy.

Central Asia remains a region dominated by authoritarian regimes, where human rights are systematically violated and civil liberties are restricted.

(Democracy Index, 2023).

3. LEGISLATIVE CHANGES AND THREATS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

LAWMAKING TRENDS

In 2022, Tajikistan adopted an anti-discrimination law. This is the first such law in Central Asia. Although it does not mention sexual orientation and gender identity, the list of protected characteristics is open-ended. This means that LGBT people can file a complaint citing “other circumstances”. However, there is no public data on such complaints filed by LGBT people. The climate of persecution does not allow LGBT people to feel sufficiently protected to openly declare their SOGI when filing complaints of discrimination (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Tajikistan, 2024, ECOM).

In two countries of the region, consensual same-sex relations between adult men are criminalized: under Article 120 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Article 135 of the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan.

In Tajikistan, there are frequent cases where other criminal provisions are used to prosecute LGBT people, for example, Article 241 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Tajikistan: “Illegal production and circulation of pornographic materials or objects”.

The so-called [Law](#) “on LGBT Propaganda” has been in force in Kyrgyzstan since 2023². The law prohibits the dissemination of information that “rejects family and traditional social values, promotes non-traditional sexual relations, and fosters disrespect for parents or other family members” (citation).

There are no known cases of prosecution under this law, however, ECOM has documented a case of extortion by law enforcement officials against a queer person. The officers used the law prohibiting propaganda to blackmail the victim, even though they were not an activist and did not disseminate any information about LGBT people (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Kyrgyzstan, 2024, ECOM).

In 2024, Kyrgyzstan adopted the [Law](#) “on Foreign Representatives”, which was widely criticized by the international community and civil society organizations. The law led to a crisis in civil society; many NGOs decided to close down or stopped their work on advocacy and human rights.

In a wide range of countries, from Russia to Kyrgyzstan and from Georgia to Hungary, “foreign agent” laws have become a favorite tool of authoritarian regimes to suppress critical voices, evade public scrutiny, and consolidate their own power.

([Human Rights Watch](#), 2024).

² The Law «on Measures to Prevent Harm to the Health of Children, and to Their Physical, Intellectual, Mental, Spiritual and Moral Development in the Kyrgyz Republic» was adopted on 09.08.2023.

During the promotion of the bill, parliamentarians often referred to “Western values” and “LGBT propaganda”. There are serious concerns that the bill could be used against human rights organizations that protect LGBT people (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Kyrgyzstan, 2024, ECOM).

There is no similar law in Kazakhstan, however, there has been broad public discussion about the need to adopt one for several years now.

A [petition](#) against “LGBT propaganda” has collected 50,000 signatures and has provoked an increase in online hate speech, and a hate campaign against individual activists. UN Special Rapporteurs have [called on](#) Kazakh authorities to reject the petition because it calls for the violation of the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Kazakhstan, 2024, ECOM).

Despite calls from UN Special Rapporteurs to reject the petition, Kazakh authorities held a number of meetings to consider it. The Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan decided to partially satisfy the petition: the authorized body will consider the need to introduce restrictions on the distribution of LGBT content among children and adolescents. In November 2024, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan [stated](#) that “government agencies have begun to study the impact of the LGBT movement on children.” It is planned to conduct research on this topic in 2025 (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Kazakhstan, 2024, ECOM).

After all the necessary studies are completed, a public discussion on the issues of regulation in this field will be organized. In general, the issue is under the control of authorized bodies and the government.

— the prime minister added.

Public discussion of issues concerning the possible narrowing and/or limitation of the human rights of a certain social group is a risky decision, especially if it relates to LGBT people in countries with a high level of publicly approved homophobia.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

There is no humane procedure for changing one’s gender marker in any country in the Central Asia region. There is no person-oriented legislative framework and no accompanying services to support those who have begun preparing to change their gender marker. Informational, social and medical support is needed.

In Uzbekistan, trans people have limited access to legal gender recognition due to problematic legislation. Article 149 of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan “on Approval of the Rules for Registration of Civil Status Acts” allows for amendments to be made when “changing gender”, but does not explain the term “changing gender”.

This means that different officials may require different documents and other procedures to prove “gender change”, and trans people are often forced to undergo a lengthy diagnostic process with mandatory observation in a neuropsychiatric dispensary. Another common problem characteristic of Uzbekistan is the persecution of trans women under Article 120 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan³.

In accordance with paragraph 13 of Article 257 of the [Code](#) of the Republic of Kazakhstan “on Marriage (Matrimony) and Family”, a mandatory condition for legal gender recognition is “surgical sex change”. This norm is part of an invasive and humiliating procedure. Trans people who do not want to undergo such operations or do not have the means to do so do not have access to legal gender recognition. The lack of medical protocols for gender-affirmative procedures in Tajikistan leads to the fact that trans people are forced to independently take hormone therapy without prescriptions from appropriate medical specialists in the country, and/or to travel abroad for surgical interventions. This limits access to health for trans people.

In 2024, the Kyrgyz parliament revised the [legislation](#) “on the Protection of Citizens’ Health” and raised the mandatory age for seeking services for “medical intervention to change, correct gender identity” from 18 years to 25 years⁴. This is not the first case where the rights of trans people to legal gender recognition were restricted. Back in 2020, when amending the Law “on Acts of Civil Status”, the provision that served as the basis for changing the gender marker in a person’s passport was removed. This prevents trans people from being able to directly amend their documents; the issue is now resolved in court⁵.

TRENDS RELATED TO PROHIBITIONS AND PERSECUTION

In the last two years, all countries in the region have seen increased pressure on LGBT activists. In Uzbekistan, the number of criminal cases against LGBT people under Article 120 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan has increased, which has been confirmed by [data](#) collected for the UN Universal Periodic Review.

The victim went on a “fake date”. He was detained for three days by law enforcement officers, who demanded that he confess that he had sexual intercourse with men. As a result, the victim was forced to confess, and was sentenced to 1 year and 6 months of house arrest by the court.

(ECOM Monitoring, 2024).

After serving their sentence under Article 120 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan, victims remain in a criminal database and continue to be persecuted. There are known cases when law enforcement officers demanded that those who served a sentence under Article 120 of the Criminal Code confess to committing another crime (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Uzbekistan, 2024, ECOM)

³ Without the ability to change documents, they became easy targets for law enforcement agencies; as a result, human rights organizations have recorded cases of extortion, threats, and imprisonment.

⁴ Article 47. Change, correction of gender identity

Change, correction of gender identity is carried out in healthcare organizations through medical intervention at the request of a patient over 25 years of age, who has full legal capacity, in accordance with medical-biological and socio-psychological indications in the manner determined by the Cabinet of Ministers.

⁵ Changing a gender marker through the court is a time-consuming and costly procedure that trans people often cannot manage on their own; to date, there is only one known case where the courts ordered a change of a person’s gender marker.

Numerous cases of pressure, persecution, blackmail, as well as cruel treatment and torture committed against LGBT people (primarily men and trans persons) by law enforcement officials have been recorded in all countries of the region. The vulnerability of the community, criminal prosecution for homosexual relations and/or HIV transmission, as well as the high level of stigmatization based on SOGI in these communities, give unscrupulous law enforcement officials free rein, making LGBT people easy prey.

I met a guy online. He came by car to pick me up, took me to the police station, and interrogated me about who else I knew from the community. They threatened to disclose information about my orientation to my family. They took me to the AIDS Center. I have been taking ARV therapy for two years now. Using all of this, they threatened to put me in jail under Article 125, and forced me to pay \$3,000.

(ECOM Monitoring, 2024).

In addition, there are cases of extortion using threats to disclose a person's status to other people, which leads to isolation and a lack of trust within the community itself.

High levels of public stigma and criminalization are the reasons for the lack of opportunities to receive support and services within civil society. LGBT people in Central Asian countries have limited access to legal and psychological assistance or shelters. Only a few countries in the region have LGBT organizations and initiatives that provide friendly services.

In May 2023, the Uzbek authorities refused to register an NGO that planned to provide legal assistance to the LGBT+ community, citing the 'inconsistency between its statutory goals and national interests'.

(National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Uzbekistan, 2024, ECOM).

There are no officially registered LGBT organizations in Turkmenistan, and any attempt to establish one is suppressed by the authorities.

4. INFORMATIONAL FIELD AND PUBLIC SENTIMENT

PUBLIC SENTIMENT

In 2023–2024, Central Asian countries demonstrated a deterioration in public sentiment towards human rights and LGBT communities, which may be due to the strengthening of conservative views, state propaganda, and the legislative changes or initiatives described in the previous section.

A petition filed in Kazakhstan in 2023 entitled “We are against open and hidden LGBT propaganda in Kazakhstan!” collected more than 50,000 signatures, which is a marker of the high level of acceptability and approval of homophobia in Kazakh society.

A number of local media outlets [published](#) publications in support of the petition. There were public statements at the ministerial and parliamentary level, with the Minister of Information and Social Development of Kazakhstan [stating](#):

Our generational duty is to give children the right spiritual and moral guidelines, to cultivate traditional family values in them, and to create the necessary conditions for commitment to the national cultural heritage and the preservation of their genetic code.

There have been no changes in public sentiment in Uzbekistan; on the contrary, the country’s [Universal Periodic Review](#) at the UN in 2023 became a platform for the state to reaffirm its homophobic position. The discussion of this document in parliament at the end of 2023 showed that the Uzbek authorities remain adamant in maintaining criminal liability for same-sex relations between men under Article 120 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Calls for a ban on any form of support for LGBT people were spread on social networks and in the media.

Despite the fact that the European Parliament [issued a resolution](#) on Uzbekistan in 2023 condemning the criminalization of same-sex relations, the country continues to tighten the criminalization of LGBT people and their ability to exercise any human rights and freedoms. In November 2024, [information](#) came to light alleging that the Uzbek authorities were developing a law prohibiting the “propaganda of undesired sexual relations”, as stated by the chairman of the “Milliy Tiklanish” party, Alisher Kadyrov.

In Kyrgyzstan, parliamentarians [demonstrate](#) high levels of homophobia and intolerance towards people living with HIV, which threatens the work of not only LGBT human rights organizations, but also the fight against the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In countries of the region, the situation related to the right to speak out publicly about human rights remains poor.

In June 2023, the police in Almaty dispersed a peaceful rally by LGBT activists dedicated to the International Day Against Homophobia. In 2024, the Constitutional Court accepted an [appeal](#) to verify the constitutionality of the restriction on holding peaceful assemblies. Among the issues to be considered were several provisions of the Law “on the Procedure for Organizing and Holding Peaceful Assemblies” related to the reasons for withholding permission for peaceful assemblies.

Another alarming trend relates to [proposals](#) by parliamentarians to classify the Kazakh feminist initiative [“Feminita”](#) экстремистской организацией. Одной из причин этого предложения стал факт того, что «Феминита» участвует в организации мирных собраний. А в октябре 2024 года, одну из основательниц инициативы задержали во время проведения мероприятия «Лесбийский курултай» (Национальный отчет о нарушении прав ЛГБТ в Казахстане, 2024, ЕКОМ).

5. POSITION OF GOVERNMENTS, UN AGENCIES AND SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS, AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, against the backdrop of new legislative initiatives and worsening public opinion around the issue of rights and freedoms for all, there has also been a change in the public position of government representatives. Ministers and parliamentarians feel emboldened to make homophobic statements and call for the restriction of human rights, as well as a return to “traditional values”.

The Global Fund gives \$29 million for girls to marry girls, the Deputy Prime Minister gives permission for this. Why are they promoting an ideology that contradicts the customs and traditions of the Kyrgyz people? When did Kyrgyz girls marry girls? Why doesn't the Deputy Prime Minister stop this?

— asked a parliamentary deputy.

The head of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic assured the deputy that the authorities are developing a new Family Code, which will clearly spell out that a family is comprised of a union exclusively between a man and a woman.

The Family Code will be ready soon – it will regulate everything. Before this, everything was adopted because of human rights, now this will not happen. I hope we will be able to do this by May-June; if not, in September we will propose the new Family Code and we will regulate everything under the law. We will establish that a family is a union between a man and a woman. We will include in the Code that the family will be responsible for the upbringing of children. We have signed on to all possible conventions for the protection of human rights. We will put them in order and withdraw from a number of conventions⁶.

In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, international recommendations on the protection of LGBT people remain unheeded. Following the UPR cycle, the Uzbek authorities rejected almost all recommendations on improving the situation with regard to LGBT rights in the country. The country received 16 recommendations related to SOGI. At the same time, Uzbekistan accepted a recommendation from Mexico «to repeal [Article 113](#) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan in order to decriminalize HIV transmission and ensure that HIV testing is strictly voluntary under all circumstances».

⁶ The head of the Cabinet of Ministers supported the demands of MP Atazov to ban same-sex marriages. – Kloop, 2024.
— URL; <https://kloop.kg/blog/2023/04/28/glava-kabmina-podderzhal-trebovaniya-deputata-atazova-zapretit-odnopolnye-braki/>

The Government of Uzbekistan accepted all recommendations except the 15 that relate to the rights of LGBT people. The delegation's references to 'generally accepted norms' that prevent the recognition of LGBT rights shift the focus away from the government's responsibility for the vicious practices and legislation that deny LGBT people access to basic rights.

– [notes](#) Human Rights Watch.

STATEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF UN AGENCIES AND SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS

All five countries in the region regularly undergo the [UN Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#):



KAZAKHSTAN will receive recommendations in 2025⁷; among the list of issues for the country, one relates to the rights of LGBT people:

How will the government of Kazakhstan ensure that the rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, children, persons belonging to religious groups, the LGBT community or other minorities, are protected?

(United Kingdom).



As mentioned above, **KYRGYZSTAN** will receive recommendations in 2025. Human rights organizations have already submitted alternative reports, and the UPR working group is [collecting](#) data from UN agencies and special procedures on the human rights situation in the country:

The UN Country Office team noted that limited progress had been made in combating all forms of discrimination, with no steps taken by the state to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation on any grounds and no policies in place to combat discrimination. Hate speech and negative attitudes against the LGBTIQ community were widespread and LGBTIQ issues were politicized.



TAJIKISTAN received [recommendations](#) in 2022, including 3 concerning the rights of LGBT people. Not one has been accepted by the state for implementation.



TURKMENISTAN received [recommendations](#) in 2024, including 8 concerning LGBT rights. Only 1 was accepted by the state for implementation:

⁷ International organizations and national NGOs have already submitted [alternative reports](#).

Take the necessary measures to establish in national legislation a comprehensive legal framework that provides adequate and effective protection against all forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and to abolish the criminalization of consensual sexual relations between adults of the same sex.

(Argentina).



UZBEKISTAN received [recommendations](#) in 2023, including 12 concerning the rights of LGBT people, only two of which the state accepted for implementation:

Legalize and include in the Criminal Code crimes related to domestic violence and gender-based violence, taking into account sexual orientation and gender identity.

(Uruguay).

Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and lift the ban on consensual same-sex relationships.

(Czech Republic).

UN COMMITTEES AND SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS

Over the past two years, UN Special Rapporteurs have responded several times to attempts to adopt repressive legislation in the Kyrgyz Republic. For instance, in 2023, three Special Rapporteurs (on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, on freedom of opinion and expression, and on the situation of human rights defenders) [called on](#) the Kyrgyz authorities not to adopt the law on foreign agents. Subsequently, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression [called on](#) the Kyrgyz authorities to abandon the draft Law “on Media”, which has caused condemnation among Kyrgyz civil society (National Report on Violations of the Rights of LGBT People in Kyrgyzstan, 2024, ECOM).

In 2023, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed its concern about discriminatory amendments that limit the bodily autonomy of trans people and [recommended](#) that the Kyrgyz Republic restore the possibility of medical interventions from the age of 18⁸.

In 2023, the UN Committee against Torture called on Kazakhstan to abolish this requirement, as well as the requirement for a psychiatric diagnosis, and to establish procedures for changing the gender marker on a non-discriminatory and voluntary basis. This recommendation was not implemented.

⁸ Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Kyrgyzstan. — E/C.12/KGZ/CO/4, paragraph 22, 23. — 2024.

In addition, UN experts made a statement and [called on](#) the Kazakh authorities to reject the petition on so-called “LGBT propaganda”, as it calls for violations of the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly on the basis of SOGI.

The UN Human Rights Committee, during the 3rd periodic review of Turkmenistan on compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in relation to violations of the rights of LGBT persons, regretted the lack of progress and information “on measures taken by the State party to address the discriminatory treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, including violent homophobic and transphobic acts against them, and awareness-raising campaigns and measures to combat stereotypes. Furthermore, in line with the Committee’s previous recommendations, the Committee remains concerned that consensual same-sex relations between adult males continue to be criminalized under article 135 of the Criminal Code of Turkmenistan⁹. ”

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND DONORS

Among the major international donors working in the region, only the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) supports LGBT people in its programs through the provision of services and educational programs for LGBT people. When analyzing the programs of the United States Agency for International Development ([USAID](#)) and the [World Bank in Tajikistan](#), which are active in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in particular, it was not possible to find any mention of support for LGBT human rights defenders, or any mention of the promotion of the values of equality and human rights for all marginalized groups in these countries as part of the numerous projects of these organizations aimed at supporting sustainable development and civil society.

Statements by human rights activists that cases of involuntary (forced) HIV testing among adult men have become more frequent are not receiving due attention from international organizations. Such actions by medical workers and law enforcement agencies constitute an interference in private life and control over sexual behavior, and may result in subsequent prosecution and punishment (this primarily relates to forced testing in Uzbekistan, where voluntary same-sex relations between adult men are criminalized).

In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, UN agencies implement programs aimed at promoting gender equality, and try to include issues related to the protection of the rights of LGBT communities. Some agencies provide support to human rights organizations, but their impact on the situation as a whole is limited due to resistance from the authorities. In addition, support for LGBT human rights organizations makes up an insignificant part of the program portfolio of most donors.

There is a lack of inclusion of LGBT human rights issues and support for activists in broader donor initiatives (intersectionality approach), which, among other things, leads to the low level of involvement of mainstream human rights organizations in supporting LGBT colleagues.

⁹ The Committee recommended that the Government of Turkmenistan: (a) *Repeal Article 135 of the Criminal Code in order to bring its legislation into compliance with the Covenant;* (b) *Take measures to effectively combat all forms of social stigmatization, harassment, incitement to hatred, discrimination or violence against persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.*

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The systematic backsliding in democracy, as well as the significant advancement of legislative initiatives aimed at depriving LGBT people of their ability to enjoy human rights and freedoms in Central Asian countries, requires an urgent response from the international community. Expressing concern and patiently waiting for the political climate to soften will no longer help. It is necessary to take action in defense of LGBT people.

International organizations and major intergovernmental donors must send clear signals to the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan about the inadmissibility of inequality, discrimination and the persecution of LGBT people. “Traditional values” and religious views cannot justify human rights violations and repressive legislation targeting civil society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To the Regional Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for Central Asia (ROCA OHCHR) and UN agencies in Central Asia

1.1 In a situation where silence surrounds human rights violations, it is important to systematically collect and publish verified data. OHCHR regional offices in Central Asian countries can serve as hubs for meetings with human rights defenders, conduct regular monitoring of violations of LGBT rights, document cases of violence, discrimination and repression, and publish annual thematic reports. They can also focus the attention of special rapporteurs on systemic violations, and regularly provide specific recommendations for each Central Asian state.

1.2 It is necessary to strengthen the efforts of UN agencies to promote comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including the protection of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in national laws in the countries of Central Asia. Another important task is to focus as much as possible on international initiatives, such as the inclusion of protection against discrimination in various laws in the fields of labor, education, medicine, etc.

OHCHR regional offices and UN agencies can support governments in their efforts to develop road maps or plans for implementing UPR recommendations, assist in identifying experts and best practices from other countries, conduct training events, and provide technical assistance. It is important to emphasize intersectionality and take into account the human rights issues of all social groups when developing plans for the implementation of UPR recommendations.

1.3 A separate challenge that requires the consolidated efforts of all UN agencies is the work to promote the decriminalization of same-sex relations in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This is a necessary step in order to, firstly, ensure protection from cruel and inhuman treatment and behavior, which may lead to torture, and, secondly, to enable the exercise of the right to private and family life and the right to privacy.

1.4 In its work in the region, the UN Development Programme can provide funding and technical support to LGBT organizations and NGOs working on human rights so that they can safely continue their activities, including the provision of services to the LGBT community. In addition, it can systematically refrain from funding government initiatives and programs, which do not include initiatives to improve the human rights situation for all, and which may lead to restrictions on civil liberties.

1.5 Given the lack of support for LGBT organizations among mainstream human rights and service NGOs, as well as the difficulties related to finding defenders in cases of persecution of LGBT activists, it is necessary to focus efforts on training and supporting lawyers and attorneys with a mandatory intersectional approach to ensure they are prepared to represent the interests of different groups of the population and to increase acceptance within professional communities.

2 To UN special rapporteurs and committees

2.1 It is important to monitor and respond to legislative initiatives targeting LGBT communities, as was the case with the “bans on propaganda” in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Such work should be systematic and ongoing, and include cooperation with grassroots initiatives and human rights defenders in the region.

2.2 In order to give due attention to the issue of human rights, it is necessary to increase the frequency of visits to the region, including consultations with representatives of the LGBT community and human rights NGOs.

3 To the EU delegation

3.1 It is essential to include demands to improve LGBT rights in the agenda of negotiations with governments of the Central Asian region as part of the conditions for receiving technical assistance. Countries in the region should be obligated to submit reports on the human rights situation and on their progress in this area. Consultations with civil society should be held prior to meetings with governments in order to draft a list of urgent human rights issues to be included in the annual dialogue with countries. LGBT organizations should be included in this dialogue.

3.2 As part of EU funds allocated to support the work of civil society (grant programs), support should be given for initiatives that advocate for LGBT rights and decriminalization and promote anti-discrimination legislation as well as for other initiatives that will contribute to ensuring that national legal systems comply with minimum EU standards.

4 To the Global Fund, USAID, the World Bank, and other international donors

4.1 Given the strong presence of World Bank programs in the region, it is imperative to integrate LGBT rights into the sustainable development agenda by channeling resources to support programs that promote equality and inclusion. It is also important to include in the conditions of technical project funding and state support programs issues that ensure compliance with UN recommendations on human rights, including protection of the rights of LGBT people.

- 4.2** The Global Fund, as the only donor in the region that consistently supports initiatives related to the right to health, should continue to fund programs aimed at providing social and health services for LGBT people, and make intersectional work a mandatory requirement for all partner organizations when receiving grant funding.
- 4.3** It is vital that major intergovernmental donors provide financial support to rapid response mechanisms that support activists and human rights defenders facing persecution, including the provision of asylum and safe spaces, as national organizations and activists often lack the resources needed for urgent responses, and restrictions on civil liberties reduce the number of people willing to risk their freedom for the sake of human rights work.
- 4.4** Another important task for the consolidated position of donors to protect and support civil society is to simplify the access of LGBT organizations to international grants and financial support by eliminating requirements that may discriminate against them, especially small organizations that often work in the field in extremely difficult conditions.

