

Kyrgyzstan Passes Anti-LGBTI+ ‘Propaganda’ Law

[article, non-discrimination](#)

Update

On 14 August 2023, the President of Kyrgyzstan signed a law to amend the child protection law. This amendment prohibits sharing information on diverse sexual orientation or gender identity, as so-called “promotion of non-traditional sexual relations”. Human rights and freedoms in Kyrgyzstan reach an alarming rock bottom with this so-called ‘propaganda law’. This law deeply interferes with the right to private life of trans and LGBTI persons, and moreover severely restricts freedom of expression, freedom of press, the rule of law, non-discrimination, and equality before the law for all people in Kyrgyzstan.

In July, the European Parliament already warned against the law and about the alarming deterioration of democratic standards and human rights in Kyrgyzstan. The Parliament is concerned about a number of Kyrgyz draft laws that are aimed at suppressing fundamental rights and freedoms.

This anti-LGBTI law copies the infamous Russian anti-LGBTI laws and discourse. The law was adopted to target human rights defenders, organisations, and journalists. TGEU stresses that this law threatens the safety of the Kyrgyz LGBTIQ community, the work of LGBTIQ human rights organisations, and has wider negative implications for democracy and human rights in the country. **We therefore call upon decision-makers and allies worldwide to take action to support democracy in the country and support LGBTIQ organisations and communities in Kyrgyzstan.**

You can learn more about the law, Kyrgyzstan’s recent attacks on human rights, and find more resources for advocacy below.

[Advocacy resources](#)

Kyrgyzstan proposes anti-LGBTI ‘propaganda’ law

On 17 March 2023, Kyrgyzstan announced a proposal to amend the child protection law. This proposal would prohibit dissemination of information on sexual and gender diversity. It closely copies the infamous Russian anti-LGBTI laws and discourse. We are concerned that this draft law threatens the safety of the Kyrgyzstan LGBTIQ community and the work of LGBTIQ human rights organisations. We call upon decision-makers and allies worldwide to take action against this initiative and support the LGBTIQ community in Kyrgyzstan.

What is proposed?

On 17 March 2023, changes to the child protection law in Kyrgyzstan were presented for discussion.

The proposal introduces fines for disseminating information about “non-traditional sexual relationships”. Article 2-1

of the draft law expands the definition of information harmful to the health and development of children as follows: “4) [information] that denies family values, promotes non-traditional sexual relationships, and encourages disrespect for parents or other family members”.

This article copies an article from the Russian ‘propaganda’ law. This article does not define ‘propaganda’, ‘family values’, or ‘non-traditional sexual relationships’. It can be widely interpreted at the subjective discretion of any authority or individual. This means the article can also be used in response to general political will.

What are the consequences?

The draft law contradicts the country’s Constitution. It restricts both the right to freedom of speech and information and the right to freedom of thought, opinion, and expression.

Other countries introduced similar laws, like in Russia with its ‘propaganda’ law and in Uzbekistan with its law on ‘sodomy’. Based on these cases, we expect this law to lead to:

- **Impact internationally agreed upon goals**, including the Sustainable Development Goals
- **Increase hate crimes and violence** against trans and LGBTI people and organisations
- **Reduce the availability of safer spaces**, including shelters, due to deliberate physical attacks and administrative persecution of NGOs working with trans and LGBTI people
- **Reduce services for trans and LGBTI people** due to fear of administrative sanctions
- **Reduce or remove healthcare services, psychological support, and information on sexual orientation and gender identity** for trans and LGBTI children and youth
- **Reduce funding for human rights activism** for trans and LGBTI people
- **Increase corruption** and cases of blackmail by law enforcement officers
- **Increase emigration of trans and LGBTI people from Kyrgyzstan**
- **Increase sexually transmitted infections and HIV**, as HIV programmes among men who have sex with men and transgender people will be directly and severely affected
- **Obstruction of human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, doctors**, and others involved in issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity
- In the long term, we expect **increased economic, cultural, and psychological violence by relatives of trans and intersex children**; decreased support from parents of trans and intersex children
- **Decline in LGBTI people’s mental health**, and **increased suicide rate among LGBTI people, especially LGBTIQ children and youth**.

In case the law is adopted, **Kyrgyzstan will violate several of its international human rights commitments:**

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Ratified by Kyrgyzstan in 1994
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Ratified by Kyrgyzstan in 1994
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Ratified by Kyrgyzstan in 1997
- Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ratified by Kyrgyzstan in 1994
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Ratified by Kyrgyzstan in 1997.

Kyrgyzstan tried to adopt a similar bill in 2014-2015. That so-called anti-propaganda law was put to a public hearing. It did not pass due to massive criticism from international actors.

What can you do?

TGEU considers that this draft law violates both the Constitution of the country and International Conventions

adopted by the Kyrgyz Republic. On top of this, it has ambiguous, unclear terms and does not meet the principle of proportionality. The adoption of the draft law will affect democracy and diversity in the country. Because the struggle for trans rights is also a struggle for social and economic justice and respect of human values in society, we urge:

Kyrgyzstani lawmakers

- Withdraw the proposed amendments in the law draft No. 6-4094/23 dated 17/03/2023 or vote against them.

International institutions

- Use your political leverage to contact Kyrgyzstani parliamentarians, condemn the amendments, and encourage Kyrgyzstani lawmakers to remove them.
- Remind Kyrgyzstani parliamentarians of Kyrgyzstan's obligations under international human rights law.
- Meet and discuss the draft law with diplomats and competent officials at the Ministries or Departments of Foreign Affairs who work in the region.
- Review and restructure your policies and programmes in Kyrgyzstan. Make sure these policies and programmes are human rights based and prioritise the most vulnerable communities, including trans people.
- Continue to monitor LGBTI human rights on a regular basis.

Civil society

- Speak up and act up to put international pressure on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, the Presidential Administration, and the Parliament to encourage them to remove the amendments.
- Express solidarity with trans and LGBTI people in Kyrgyzstan. Organise creative protests, especially in front of [Kyrgyzstani missions](#) across the world.

Mass media

- Spread correct information about the new draft laws, both on 'propaganda' and mass media. State your concern for the expected shrinking space for civil society and how this undermines democracy, fundamental rights, and freedoms in Kyrgyzstan. Research and report on the negative effects the laws are likely to have on sustainable development, public health, and levels of corruption.

Funders

- Provide urgent financial support to LGBTI organisations in Kyrgyzstan. This need to include both immediate responses and to build long-term structures for self-organising, resilience, well-being, and advocacy to protect the rights of LGBTI people.

Background: Alarming overall context for human rights in Kyrgyzstan

Throughout Eastern Europe and Central Asia, trans people face:

- economic vulnerability and poverty
- imperfect or non-existing legal gender recognition procedures
- social stigma
- harassment by law enforcement officials and civil society.

In Central Asia, the idea of ‘traditional family values’ promoted by the Kremlin is actively used by politicians. It is contrasted with ‘Western’ democracy that is deemed ‘too liberal’.

In recent years in Kyrgyzstan, alarming changes have been initiated. This goes with a general decline in the Index of Freedom and Democracy.

A new, fifth version of the draft law “On the media” was presented in Kyrgyzstan. It would significantly restrict freedom of speech, information, and media. It also includes provisions that could be used to deny registration to media deemed undesirable by the authorities and to introduce censorship. The media draft law was proposed by the Presidential Administration. Its structure is copied from several sources. The new draft law also includes a ban on “propaganda of same-sex marriage”.

In early May, the Country Coordinating Mechanism was disbanded. It was responsible for developing a countrywide HIV strategy, implementing the Global Fund budget and the HIV country application. This happened on demand of members of Parliament. They backed their demands with anti-trans and anti-LGB statements. They were outraged by the fact that Kyrgyzstan was carrying out HIV prevention activities among MSM and trans people. Such activities were labelled as not in line with ‘national traditions’. One MP even expressed concern that Global Fund money was being used to support same-sex marriages. One of the MPs, N. Shakiev, said that NGOs were leading young people down the wrong path. Shakiev added, “The future is at stake, we are talking about transgender people here.”

The disbanding of the Coordinating Mechanism will create barriers and changes in prevention programmes. This will put both people living with HIV, as key populations, and the general population at risk.

For detailed information about the draft law, the situation in Kyrgyzstan, or to discuss possible ways to respond, please contact Daniyar Orsekov, TGEU’s Senior EECA Programme Officer, at daniyar@tgeu.org.

[Additional resources](#)