



KAZAKHSTAN

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The anti-gender movement got stronger in Kazakhstan this year, and particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. NGOs, religious organisations, and right-wing radical movements advocated against “forced vaccinations” and the “propaganda of homosexuality and sex change”. The public continues to believe that LGBT rights are a ‘Western’ import and threaten the local culture and traditions.

The NGO Kazakhstani Union of Parents conducted a harmful campaign saying that anti-bullying efforts are an attempt to influence children with ‘LGBT propaganda’ and that sex and relationship education should not be introduced in schools.

The ultra-conservative group Namys called for hate and violence against LGBT people, including at an event in May and online.

In August, MP Kairat Kudaibergen called for a public boycott of Qańtar, an illustrator who has posted drawings of same-sex couples in traditional Kazakh attire. Many supported Qańtar online.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The trans initiative ALMA-TQ published the groundbreaking research report ”Living Our Lives Unseen: Research of the Realities of Life for Transgender People in Kazakhstan”.

ALMA-TQ also documented 21 cases between January 2020 to October 2021, where trans people were subjected to discrimination and/or violence by family members, police, medical professionals, and others. It also highlights that trans people are exposed to daily microaggressions, have to hide their identity and live in isolation.

As part of their reporting on the forceful detention of two activists in May (see under **Human rights defenders**), Radio Free Europe shared the testimonies of several LGBT people in Kazakhstan, who have had to hide their identities due to violence, family rejection, and discrimination.

Kok.team organised support or fundraisers for the victims of family rejection, homelessness, extortion, and blackmail (see here and here).

A blogger posted a video of himself burning rainbow coloured pop-it toys.

EMPLOYMENT

Following several years of advocacy by the Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative “Feminita” (see here, here, and here), the anti-discrimination centre Memorial, and others, the list of prohibited professions for women was abolished by the President this year.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Kazakhstan, highlighting discrimination against LGBTI people and the regressive 2020 order that limits trans persons’ right to legal gender recognition and access to trans healthcare.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May, the British Embassy in Nursultan released a podcast dedicated to LGBT rights and the LGBTI+ community in Kazakhstan, and the US Embassy placed a rainbow flag on its building. Employees of 20 embassies also released a support message.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On 8 March, International Women’s Day, Kazakhstan saw a record number of participants at the International Women’s Day march in Almaty. For the first time, the event was allowed to go ahead by local authorities. LBQ women also joined the march openly displaying LGBTI symbols. Fought and fallen victims of police brutality and anti-LGBTI attacks for their initiatives to hold peaceful marches in Almaty.

HEALTH

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, trans healthcare services remained difficult to access. Border closures limited the possibility of trans people to receive gender affirming medical services in neighbouring countries. Trans people faced difficulties visiting medical centres for consultations or acquiring the necessary medical documents they need for legal gender recognition.

Despite ongoing criticism from national and international civil society (see for instance here and here) regarding the 2020 Ministry of Health order that raised the age limit for trans healthcare access from 18 to 21 and excludes those with a mental health or “behavioural disorder” diagnosis, the regulations remained unchanged.



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, activities including service provision, meetings, and community support had to stay online. Activists continued reporting high rates of burnout.

Local LGBTI activists Zhanar Sekerbayeva and Gulzada Serzhan were assaulted several times this year. On 29 May, a group of 30 men attacked them as they were trying to organise an event on women's rights for a group of local women in Shymkent. A number of men came to the venue chanting religious calls and homophobic slurs. They beat Zhanar and attacked Gulzada. The police who were called for help, sided with the men instead of protecting the victims. They dragged Zhanar and Gulzada into a car (not an official police car) and took them to a police station where they were illegally detained for over eight hours. Their attackers were neither arrested nor detained. A number of embassies and NGOs condemned the incident. Similar events were disrupted by angry demonstrators in Qaraghandy in July. A demonstration was held in August in Aqtobe, where a similar event was planned. In Shymkent and Qaragandy, the police argued that they detained the activists for their own safety.

A similar attack took place on 21 November, when Zhanar and Gulzada were meeting with LBQT women in Oskemen. The activists were able to finish the meeting, but representatives of the Committee of National Security and the police asked Zhanar and Gulzada to finish earlier and escorted the activists to the airport. Local activists helped ensure the safety of the participants and cooperated with the police. Nevertheless, the police harassed and humiliated the participants, gathered their personal information, and spread misinformation about Feminita and its members.

In May, Zhanar and Gulzada were invited by the Ministry of Justice to discuss how Kazakhstan can implement its 2020 UPR recommendations. The recommendations included introducing legislation to combat discrimination and violence against LGBTI people and creating favorable conditions for the activities of civil society and human rights defenders. Feminita is alarmed that hate crimes against human rights defenders are carried out with impunity. The Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed later in the year that they did not prosecute any of the attackers. Feminita is also concerned that instead of receiving police protection, they are harassed and surveilled by the

authorities. Gulzada and Zhanar suspect that their phones were tapped, as they keep information about locations and participants secret. The police also shared misinformation about the activists, calling Zhanar a “disruptor of public order” and claiming that they were duly protected by the police.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

ALMA-TQ's report 'Living Our Lives Unseen' documents difficulties faced by trans people due to abusive legal gender recognition requirements. In particular, the surgery requirement puts trans people in an impossible situation where they must choose between access to correct documents or their bodily integrity. 75% of those participating in ALMA-TQ's research cited the surgery requirement as their main barrier of having their documents changed. Other requirements, such as having to go through a long list of mandatory steps, were also highlighted as a key issue. The participants shared that in lack of matching documents, they have to deal with social and economic exclusion, manifesting in difficulties in education and employment and being exposed to violence.

**Some of the information about Kazakhstan 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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