



ERADICATION OF LGBTQI+ ISSUES FROM STATE POLICY: CHALLENGES TO EQUALITY IN GEORGIA

2025

Eradication of LGBTQI+ Issues from State Policy: Challenges to Equality in Georgia
Ekaterine Skhiladze

© Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) 2025

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Norway. Its contents are the sole responsibility of WISG and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union, UNDP and Norway.

No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from WISG except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.



www.wisg.org

Tbilisi
2025

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	3
Introduction.....	4
1. Domestic Legislative framework	6
2. Institutional Mechanisms and State Policy	9
3. Fulfillment of International Human Rights Obligations	11
4. Political Homophobia and State's discriminatory Discourse	13
5. The Influence of Ultra-right and Violent Groups on the State Policy	15
6. The Influence of the State Policy on the Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons	16
6.1. The Safety and Security	17
6.2. Access to Healthcare.....	18
6.3. Freedom of Expression and Assembly	18
6.4. Legal Gender Recognition	19
6.5. Education and Labour Rights	19
Conclusion	20

Abbreviations and Acronyms

LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and others
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
COE	Council of Europe
CPAC	Conservative Political Action Conference
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EU	European Union
PDO	Public Defender's Office of Georgia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPR	United Nations Universal Periodic Review
WISG	Women's Initiatives Supporting Group

Introduction

Right after gaining independence from the post-Soviet era, Georgia set its sights on aligning with international human rights standards, reforming domestic legislation, and reinforcing institutional mechanisms. This period also marked the ratification of major international treaties and conventions, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc. Later, Georgia's declared aspiration toward European integration led to the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation. Although the Georgia legislation, through these amendments was not explicitly discriminatory toward LGBTQI+ individuals, issues of equality have never been an integral part of state policy.

State policy on equality has consistently been shaped by the agendas of various groups, revealing both a lack of political will and the fragility of existing mechanisms. When issues related to education, healthcare, or other sectors were addressed, a dominant concern has always been how the church might respond, or whether public discussion of these topics would provoke mobilization of violent groups. Under every government administration, the idea of equality has never taken supremacy over these considerations. As a result, members of the LGBTQI+ community still remain unable to fully exercise their rights to freedom of assembly and expression. Additionally, there have been no significant reforms in the fields of education or healthcare that would address the challenges faced by this group in their everyday lives.

The process of adopting the anti-discrimination law was noteworthy, as it was one of the obligations under the Association Agreement with the European Union. The review and adoption of the law took place in light with protests organized by violent groups and resistance from the Georgian Patriarchate.¹ At that time, however, the government demonstrated the political will to adopt the law, viewing it as a precondition for gaining visa liberalization. Also evidenced by statements made by the prime minister at the time.² Although the law on the "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination"³ provides a strong legal foundation for protecting the rights of the LGBTQI+ community, its implementation in practice has never reflected the specific needs of this community. These needs have consistently been left out of the state's political agenda and treated merely as part of general policy.

It is worth noting that the state's policy on equality has always been flawed and has never fully addressed the needs and challenges of various social groups. However, in recent years, a clear backlash against human rights—particularly in the area of equality—has become evident. Whereas in earlier years, state authorities adopted a formal approach and maintained neutral positions in public discussions on equality, in more recent times they have openly opposed the idea of equality through their actions, public statements and discriminatory legislation, especially targeting the LGBTQI+ community.

¹ Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/123664>

² Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/186989>

³ The law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, 2014. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2339687?publication=0>

The lack of responses from state institutions, the practical removal of equality topics from the state agenda and the rise of homophobic sentiments within parts of society have further endangered the human rights situation of the LGBTQI+ community—a situation that has always been challenging. Existing political homophobia has been transformed into discriminatory legislation, which has, in practice, severely restricted the ability of the LGBTQI+ community to exercise their rights.

The radical shift in political direction between 2022 and 2024, including sabotaging the country's Euro-Atlantic integration,⁴ further deepened existing inequalities. The state positioned itself as the primary agent of discrimination, and due to both legal and practical restrictions, advancing human rights and equality became nearly impossible—especially for LGBTQI+ individuals. These recent developments have cast doubt on Georgia's commitment to strengthening democracy and fulfilling its international human rights obligations.

The adoption of the law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence (2024)⁵ and the Foreign Agents Registration Act (2025)⁶ posed a serious threat to the existence of critical NGOs and media outlets in Georgia. Since pivotal services for LGBTQI+ individuals are primarily provided by NGOs, the enforcement of these laws most severely impacts the human rights situation of this group.

The state's long-standing homophobic rhetoric has now been institutionalized through the law of Georgia on the "Protection of Family Values and Minors."⁷ The homophobic campaign that preceded the law's adoption further harmed community members and the organizations supporting them. In addition, the fundamental rights of LGBTQI+ individuals have been restricted—including access to healthcare, freedom of expression, assembly, civil rights, employment, and education.

Hence, the latest political developments have called into question the progress previously made in the field of human rights. The adoption of discriminatory legislation threatens not only the removal of LGBTQI+ issues from state policy but also constitutes a major attack on NGOs, freedom of expression and the principle of equality. By spreading homophobic narratives and using hate speech, the state itself undermines a core national interest: the aspiration to become a democratic country where every individual enjoys equal rights and freedoms. Moreover, these actions negatively impact the realization of individuals' fundamental rights.

The following report examines the removal of LGBTQI+ issues from state policy, the increasing use of hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric in political discourse and the existing challenges at both the legislative and institutional levels. It aims to highlight how these trends affect the human rights situation of the LGBTQI+ community, hinder the effective implementation of national legislation and undermine the broader process of democratic development.

⁴ Available at: <https://1tv.ge/lang/en/news/pm-kobakhidze-no-eu-accession-negotiations-until-2028-rejecting-grants-to-avoid-blackmail/>

⁵ The law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence, 2024. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6171895?publication=0>

⁶ Available in Georgian at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30320>

⁷ The law of Georgia on Protection of Family Values and Minors, 2024. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6283110?publication=0>

1. Domestic Legislative framework

The principle of equality is one of the core values enshrined in the Constitution of Georgia, in Article 11.⁸ Although the article does not explicitly mention sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds, the Constitutional Court of Georgia has clarified in its 2008 and 2014 rulings⁹ that the listed grounds are not exhaustive. According to the Court, it is essential to interpret the clause in a dynamic and inclusive manner, allowing for the recognition of additional grounds that may serve as a basis for discrimination.

In this context, the 2014 law on the “Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination”¹⁰ holds particular importance, as it explicitly includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds. The law was adopted to fulfill Georgia’s international obligations under the Association Agreement with the European Union. It is worth noting that the adoption of the law was met with public protests, primarily organized by the Orthodox Church of Georgia and its supporters. Nevertheless, the Parliament of Georgia proceeded with its adoption.

From the outset, the primary motivation for adopting this law was to fulfill international obligations rather than to acknowledge the needs and challenges of marginalized groups. Hence, as a result, it was never effectively integrated into national policy documents. However, at the time, the law was regarded as a milestone, and mechanisms were established to address discrimination, through the Public Defender's Office and the Courts.

Despite this important legislative milestone, its effective implementation has faced significant challenges. To truly enforce the law, progress in national policy is essential. However, in Georgia, no government has prioritized LGBTQI+ equality at the level of national policy or integration. Shifting from a neutral and formal approaches to overtly discriminatory and homophobic policies, the state has failed to protect LGBTQI+ individuals. As a result, community members continue to face societal stigma, violence, and negative attitudes—demonstrating that the legal framework alone is insufficient to ensure equality.

Despite the adoption of a progressive anti-discrimination law, the manipulation of LGBTQI+ issues and the use of disinformation to gain societal support—particularly during elections and within political discourse—had become integral elements of state policy. A notable example is the Constitutional amendment redefining marriage. Although the Civil Code of Georgia already defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman,¹¹ the ruling party proposed a package of Constitutional amendments, which were adopted in December 2018. The newly introduced Article 30 of the Constitution explicitly defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman, effectively closing the door on future legal recognition of same-sex unions. This amendment restricts the rights and equality of Georgian citizens and also affects same-sex couples who were married abroad and wish to reside in Georgia.¹²

⁸ *The Constitution of Georgia, 1995. Available at:*

<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>

⁹ *The Constitutional Court of Georgia: Rulings available in Georgian at:* <https://constcourt.ge/en/judicial-acts?legal=304> and <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2243812?publication=0>

¹⁰ *The law of Georgia on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, 2014. Available at:*

<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/2339687?publication=0>

¹¹ *The Civil Code of Georgia, Article 1106. Available at:*

<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/31702?publication=133>

¹² *The Constitution of Georgia, Article 30. Available at:*

<https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/30346?publication=36>

In response to these constitutional changes, the Venice Commission issued an opinion emphasizing that the new provision should in no case be interpreted as prohibiting same-sex partnerships. As a member state of the Council of Europe, Georgia is obligated to uphold the standards set forth by the European Convention on Human Rights.¹³

LGBTQI+ issues were included in a national policy document for the first time in Georgia's 2018–2020 National Human Rights Action Plan, specifically in Chapter 15 on Gender Identity and Equality, which was added in 2020.¹⁴ While the inclusion of this chapter marked an important step forward, it was never effectively implemented. In contrast, the 2022–2030 Human Rights Strategy¹⁵ omits any reference to LGBTQI+ topics entirely, and the corresponding 2024–2026 Human Rights Action Plan has similarly failed to address these issues.¹⁶ The European Union's enlargement policy has recommended that Georgia amend its national strategies to ensure the inclusion of all groups, including the LGBTQI+ community.¹⁷ However, these recommendations have not been acted upon.

The 2022 adopted Parliamentary "National Concept on Gender Equality"¹⁸ reflects similar shortcomings. While the updated version marked some progress compared to the 2006's concept, its scope remained narrowly focused on achieving equality between men and women. Hence, it does not recognize gender diversity or address the specific needs of the LGBTQI+ community. This omission highlights the ongoing inconsistencies and the largely symbolic nature of Georgia's legislative and policy commitments to comprehensive equality.

Additionally, Georgia lacks a clear and accessible mechanism for legal gender recognition, effectively denying transgender individuals the ability to have their gender legally acknowledged. The existing procedures are vague and inconsistent. On December 1, 2022, the European Court of Human Rights issued a decision stating that Georgia had violated the right to private and family life. The Court emphasized the importance of establishing a precise and transparent legal framework that ensures transgender individuals the right to legal gender recognition.¹⁹

In 2022–2024, state policy in Georgia became particularly discriminatory. Not only were issues of equality removed from the national agenda, but openly discriminatory rhetoric also intensified. Of particular concern are two legislative initiatives: the adoption of the so-called "foreign influence" law and the so-called "law on family purity and protection of minors." Both were preceded by organized campaigns fueled by homophobia and hate.

In Georgia, legislative initiatives targeting the LGBTQI+ community have followed multiple steps. Although, prior to May 2023, the government did not explicitly state its intention to

¹³ Venice Commission, *draft opinion*, 2017. Available at:

[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI\(2017\)006-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-PI(2017)006-e)

¹⁴ The order of the government N116, 2020. Available in Georgian at:

<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4800846?publication=0>

¹⁵ National Human Rights Strategy (2022–2030). Available in Georgian at:

<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5757268?publication=0>

¹⁶ Human Rights Action Plan (2024–2026). Available in Georgian at:

<https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/6053557?publication=0>

¹⁷ 2024 Communication on EU enlargement policy. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/7b6ed47c-ecde-41a2-99ea-41683dc2d1bd_en?filename=Georgia%20Report%202024.pdf

¹⁸ Available in Georgian at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5664358?publication=0>

¹⁹ Available at: [https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/#/%22execidentifier%22:\[%22004-62861%22\]\]](https://hudoc.exec.coe.int/#/%22execidentifier%22:[%22004-62861%22]])

adopt such laws, in the following months it actively promoted constitutional amendments and legislative initiatives related to “family values and the protection of minors.” Earlier efforts included attempts to prohibit so-called “LGBTQI+ propaganda.” In December 2022, the conservative movement Alt-Info submitted a draft law to the Parliament of Georgia aiming to ban LGBTQI+ “propaganda”.²⁰ On July 1, 2023, during Tbilisi Pride Week, the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church called for legislative measures against “LGBTQI+ propaganda”.²¹ In February 2024, the ruling party Georgian Dream, along with its satellite group “People’s Power”, intensified rhetoric against LGBTQI+ initiatives. They also announced that legislative amendments were underway to restrict “LGBTQI+ propaganda”.²²

On April 3, 2024, the Bureau of the Georgian Parliament officially registered a constitutional draft law on “protecting family values and minors”. Later that month, Parliament established a commission of 13 members tasked with conducting public hearings on the proposed constitutional amendments. These hearings, however, were used as a platform to spread propagandist disinformation, inciting discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ individuals and related organizations.²³

In its opinion on the draft constitutional law on the “protecting family values and minors,” the Venice Commission expressed concern that such legal amendments could restrict fundamental rights and freedoms.²⁴ The Commission emphasized that certain clauses might conflict with Georgia's international human rights obligations. It underlined that norms adopted under the name of protecting “family values” must not serve as a basis for restricting the rights of marginalized groups, including LGBTQI+ persons.

On June 4, 2024, the ruling party introduced a legislative initiative proposing the adoption of the Georgian law on “protecting family values and minors,” along with additional amendments to various existing laws. This made it evident that the earlier push for constitutional amendments was primarily a strategy to spread disinformation, while the real objective was the passage of this specific law. The draft constitutional amendments served mainly as a vehicle for public hearings designed to broadcast the ruling party’s political agenda to a broader audience as a means of electoral mobilization. The law was adopted on September 17, 2024, with 84 votes in favor and none against, and it entered into force on December 2.²⁵

Another legislative amendment was introduced in 2025, which removed the word “gender” from 15 existing laws, replacing it with terms such as “men,” “women,” and “sex.” Additionally, the Law on General Equality was renamed as the Law on Equality Between Women and Men. The Georgian Parliament adopted this amendment on April 2, 2025.²⁶ The aim of this legislative change appears to be both the rejection of the term “gender” and a

²⁰ Available in Georgian at: <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/32390522.html>

²¹ Available in Georgian at: <https://www.facebook.com/sazupatriarchate/posts/pfbid0cG8y1Y2P2abP3fWdvHtgSWt4D2kpw23KyGLkbVnkUMmvivqX92iq6TMDpoCCfWcwl>

²² Available in Georgian at: https://www.facebook.com/GeorgianDreamOfficial/posts/967257038098428?ref=embed_post

²³ Available in Georgian at: <https://shorturl.at/lcNBU>

²⁴ Venice Commission, *Opinion on the draft constitutional law on Protecting Family Values and Minors*, 2024. Available at: [https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/CDL-AD\(2024\)021-e](https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice-commission/-/CDL-AD(2024)021-e)

²⁵ The law of Georgia on Protection of Family Values and Minors, 2024. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6283110?publication=0>

²⁶ Available in Georgian at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30327>

broader shift in political direction. This move can be interpreted as an attempt to mobilize ultra-conservative supporters ahead of the upcoming local elections.

On April 2, 2025, the Georgian Parliament received a vague legislative proposal aimed at prohibiting LGBTQI+ symbolism. The initiative was submitted by the international association “Protect Your Homeland,” which stated: *“Please urgently adopt a law banning so-called LGBT marches in Georgia... Also, LGBT rainbow cloths should be legally banned in public gathering spaces.”*²⁷ Notably, according to the Parliament’s Bureau, the Human Rights and Civil Integration Committee was assigned to study the proposal and report back to the Bureau.²⁸

All of this illustrates how the erasure of LGBTQI+ topics has been removed and how discriminatory legislative initiatives have been strengthened in Georgia. These initiatives—combined with homophobic rhetoric from government officials and religious leaders—demonstrate a tangible risk of further restrictions on the human rights of the LGBTQI+ community. The political discourse has had a profound impact on the everyday lives of LGBTQI+ individuals.

In particular, NGOs working on LGBTQI+ issues have faced harassment and persecution, exacerbated by discriminatory legislation. In 2024, the law “on Transparency of Foreign Influence” obligated NGOs to register in a designated registry, granting the state access to personal and sensitive data.²⁹ The process of reviewing this law was accompanied by a degrading campaign targeting the non-governmental sector, including the posting of threatening posters on the offices and homes of human rights defenders. As a result, several organizations were forced to relocate.

Additionally, on April 1, 2025, the Georgian Parliament passed a new, more repressive law on “Foreign Agents Registration Act,” which imposes further restrictions on NGOs, including criminal liability.³⁰

2. Institutional Mechanisms and State Policy

In Georgia, there is no specific or independent equality mechanism that effectively addresses the needs of the LGBTQI+ community. Two state bodies formally responsible for equality oversight and policymaking are the Gender Equality Council of the Parliament and the Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women, and Domestic Violence. Additionally, the Public Defender plays a crucial role as an equality body.

The Parliament’s Gender Equality Council is tasked with ensuring parliamentary oversight, strengthening the legislative framework, and shaping policies to integrate gender equality both within the Parliament and across national institutions. However, its approach has been narrow, primarily focused on heteronormative gender issues, mainly excluding the concerns of the LGBTQI+ community. Moreover, in light of recent political developments, even the

²⁷ Available in Georgian at: <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/385166>

²⁸ Order of the Bureau N36/2, 4th April 2025. Available in Georgian at: <https://info.parliament.ge/file/1/BillReviewContent/385188>

²⁹ The law of Georgia on Transparency of Foreign Influence, 2024. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6171895?publication=0>

³⁰ Available in Georgian at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30320>

Council's formal activities have been halted, rendering it increasingly irrelevant within the context of a illegitimate Parliament.

In 2023, women's rights organizations called for the resignation of the Council's Chairperson, citing her promotion of sexist views and involvement in drafting discriminatory legislation.³¹ Notably, under the 2025 legislative amendments, the Gender Equality Council is being formally abolished—a move that signals a deliberate dismantling of even the minimal and ineffective equality mechanisms previously in place.³²

The second institutional mechanism—the Interagency Commission on Gender Equality, Violence Against Women, and Domestic Violence—is tasked with coordinating the development and enforcement of gender equality policies, ensuring the implementation of international obligations, and facilitating cooperation between state bodies. The Commission is chaired by the Prime Minister's Adviser on Human Rights and co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Justice. Despite its promising mandate, including the integration of gender equality into all state policies, in practice, the Commission has consistently overlooked issues related to the LGBTQI+ community. Moreover, in recent times, even its formal functioning appears to have ceased. It is also noteworthy that the title of the Prime Minister's Adviser no longer includes the word "Gender," signaling a broader regression in the state's approach.

In 2018, the Ministry of Internal Affairs took an important step by establishing the Department for Human Rights Protection and Quality Monitoring of Investigations. In its initial years, the department made significant progress by developing operational frameworks and establishing platforms, including those focused on hate crimes. However, this progress has ceased. Recently, the department has ceased cooperation with NGOs and civil society organizations, and issues related to the vulnerabilities of the LGBTQI+ community are no longer reflected in its work. Moreover, its public engagement and advocacy on these issues have also been eliminated.

The Public Defender of Georgia serves as the primary equality body responsible for enforcing the law on the "Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination". Over the years, the Public Defender's Office has established important legal precedents and issued recommendations and researches on LGBTQI+ issues. Notably, in 2013, the Public Defender's parliamentary report for the first time highlighted challenges faced by the LGBTQI+ community. That same year, on May 17 IDAHOT Day, Public Defender made a public statement in support of the community. However, in recent years—amid a broader regression in state policy—this institution's public stance has notably shifted. On May 17, 2024, the Public Defender issued no statement, despite ongoing violence and widespread homophobia targeting LGBTQI+ individuals. Moreover, Public Defender has failed to respond to the anti-LGBTQI+ law (the law on "Protection of Family Values and Minors")³³ even though it falls squarely within its anti-discrimination mandate. The Public Defender has also remained silent in the face of public hate speech and discriminatory rhetoric from ruling party members and other public figures.

³¹ Available at: <https://tbilisipride.ge/en/2023/06/30/qaltha-uphlebebeze-da-genderul-thanastsorobaze-momushave-arasamthavrobo-organizatsiebis-gantskhadeba/>

³² Available in Georgian at: <https://www.parliament.ge/legislation/30327>

³³ The evaluation of the law was reflected in the Parliamentary Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, which was submitted to the Parliament of Georgia on March 31, 2025. Available in Georgian at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2025040121291438156.pdf>

Thus, although Georgia formally maintains several national mechanisms focused on gender equality, none adequately address the needs of the LGBTQI+ community. In fact, recent policy developments reflect a clear backlash. For instance, the term “gender” has been removed from the title of the Prime Minister’s Adviser, and institutions that once led anti-discrimination efforts have either drastically reduced their engagement or totally gone silent. This trend of erasing LGBTQI+ topics from state policy increases the risk of deepening systemic discrimination.

3. Fulfillment of International Human Rights Obligations

Georgia is a party to various international conventions and a member of international organizations that obligate it to protect the rights of the LGBTQI+ community and to eliminate barriers at the legislative, institutional, and policy levels. These obligations stem from multiple international instruments, including UN conventions, Council of Europe mechanisms, European Union policy documents, and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations. While Georgia has taken notable steps in earlier years—such as the adoption of the 2014 law on the “Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination”—recent developments reveal a troubling trend: LGBTQI+ issues are increasingly being excluded from state policies and agendas. In fact, discriminatory legislation has been adopted, and Georgia has largely failed to implement international recommendations.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), in its conclusions on the 6th Periodic Review of Georgia, emphasized that the state must adopt legislative and other measures to eradicate gender-based violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex women. It also stressed the importance of ensuring access to justice and adapting essential services—including shelters—to meet the specific needs of these groups.³⁴ However, despite these recommendations, the Georgian state policy not only fails to enhance access to justice, but also actively prohibits the integration of LGBTQI+ issues and undermines the realization of the community’s fundamental rights.

In its Fifth Report on Georgia, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) issued 15 recommendations, several of which address the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. The Commission urged the Georgian government to examine existing legislation to better understand and address the daily challenges faced by same-sex couples, especially in the context of the lack of legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. ECRI also recommends the establishment of clear criteria for legal gender recognition, emphasizing that such measures should align with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, the report highlights that hate crimes—including physical violence and threats—remain a systemic issue in Georgia, and that the state’s response is inadequate. ECRI stresses the need to explicitly recognize hate motives as aggravating circumstances in both criminal and administrative law. Additionally, it calls for enhanced training for law

³⁴ *Concluding observations on the 6th periodic report of Georgia: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4007519?ln=en&v=pdf#files>

enforcement on LGBTQI+ issues and the adoption of effective mechanisms to prevent and investigate acts of violence.³⁵

During the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, Georgia regularly receives recommendations aimed at protecting LGBTQI+ individuals and ensuring equality. These include calls for a rapid response to homophobic violence, the implementation of inclusive educational programs, and the safeguarding of the right to peaceful assembly and expression.³⁶ However, the recent adoption of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation marks a significant regression. Not only has the state failed to implement previously issued UPR recommendations, but it has actively restricted freedom of expression and assembly. This development highlights a broader pattern of backsliding in fulfilling Georgia's international human rights obligations.

In his 2019 visit to Georgia, the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity expressed serious concern about the country's homophobic environment. In his report, the expert highlighted significant shortcomings, including the absence of institutional safeguards, homophobic tendencies within law enforcement agencies, and legislative gaps inconsistent with international obligations. The report identifies violence and discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community as systemic problems. As such, the expert called for comprehensive legislative and institutional reforms to enhance legal protections against hate-motivated violence, improve training for law enforcement officials, and ensure swift responses to cases of homophobic and transphobic attacks. Furthermore, the expert emphasized the need for national strategies to explicitly address the needs of the LGBTQI+ community and for educational programmes at both school and university levels to promote inclusivity and eradicate homophobic and transphobic attitudes.³⁷

In its enlargement report, the European Union highlights the alarming regression in Georgia concerning LGBTQI+ rights, including the removal of LGBTQI+ issues from state policies and the adoption of discriminatory legislation. The EU has repeatedly raised concerns about the growing prevalence of homophobic rhetoric and violence, noting that these trends call into question Georgia's readiness to meet European standards for human rights protection.³⁸

In conclusion, while Georgia formally acknowledged and accepted recommendations from international organizations, its actions suggest otherwise: the exclusion of LGBTQI+ issues from public policy and the enactment of discriminatory laws demonstrate a lack of political will and a systemic failure to implement these recommendations in practice. Human rights protection mechanisms provide clear guidance on the steps needed to build a democratic state and safeguard the LGBTQI+ community, yet Georgia continues to fall short of fulfilling these obligations.

³⁵ Fifth report on Georgia (adopted on 28 March 2023 / published on 22 June 2023). Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/georgia>

³⁶ Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ge-index>

³⁷ Visit to Georgia: Report of the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2019. Available at: <https://shorturl.at/gpuX8>

³⁸ Available at: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy/countries-region/georgia_en

4. Political Homophobia and State's discriminatory Discourse

In Georgia, it is common for high-ranking officials to disseminate discriminatory statements and hate speech targeting the LGBTQI+ community. Such rhetoric not only reinforces existing discriminatory prejudices but also fosters an increasingly hostile environment in which LGBTQI+ individuals are placed at heightened risk of harassment and violence. The Public Defender of Georgia has documented numerous instances of discriminatory language by political leaders. For example, the 2022 Report on Equality highlights that senior politicians frequently employ hate speech and inflammatory rhetoric directed at LGBTQI+ individuals. This behavior exacerbates societal discrimination and significantly increases the danger that members of the LGBTQI+ community will face violence and harassment based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.³⁹

According to the 2021 research *"From Prejudice to Equality"*: Some of the respondents consider that the people who are spreading homo/bi/transphobia in the public sphere are not naturally self-organized people but are politically interested parties and purposefully mobilized groups. A large share of the respondents from all interviewed groups believe that homophobia, as well as LGBT(Q)I issues in the public sphere, are instrumentalized by various interest groups. Consequently, aggression against the LGBT(Q)I group is not so much local, decentralized, and self-organized as it is "top-down" initiated and political.⁴⁰

These societal attitudes are reflected in the conduct of public officials and politicians who incite discrimination and propagate hate speech. In May 2023, when Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili spoke at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Hungary. At this event, he publicly aligned himself with conservative and openly pro-Russian leaders, highlighting the ideological orientation of Georgia's ruling party. In his speech, he stated that while the government would protect everyone's rights, it would not permit minorities to impose themselves on the majority or challenge values deemed important to the majority.⁴¹

A similar pattern emerged in July 2021 during Tbilisi Pride Week. The government politicized the event, portraying it in a negative light. Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili publicly stated that holding the Pride March would lead to civil unrest, claiming that it was being orchestrated by revanchist and radical forces. His rhetoric included manipulation and misrepresentation, particularly when he asserted that 95% of the population opposed what he referred to as a "propagandist" march. In doing so, the Prime Minister framed the LGBTQI+ community's peaceful exercise of their right to assembly and expression as a threat to the values of the majority.⁴² This assertion, however, is misleading. Research conducted in 2021 shows a shift in public attitudes. While 53% of respondents supported legally restricting LGBTQI+ individuals' right to expression and assembly, this marked a significant

³⁹ Special report available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2023041011140537314.pdf>

⁴⁰ Available online at: <https://wisg.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG-From-Projudice-to-Equality-2022-EN.pdf>, pg. 105.

⁴¹ Gabritchidze, N. (2023). Georgian PM's far-right bromance draws concerns. Eurasianet. Retrieved from <https://eurasianet.org/georgian-pms-far-right-bromance-draws-concerns>

⁴² Available at: <https://civil.ge/archives/431658>

decrease from 78.1% in 2016. At the same time, the proportion of those who opposed such legal restrictions doubled.⁴³

Homophobic rhetoric from state actors has become especially prominent in 2023–2024, during the parliamentary discussions surrounding the proposed anti-LGBTQI+ legislation on "protecting family values and minors." High-ranking officials openly used discriminatory language throughout the campaign supporting the bill, frequently portraying the LGBTQI+ community as a "harmful influence" on children and societal values.

In recent years, hate speech has become increasingly normalized in public discourse. Political leaders have, on multiple occasions, justified or downplayed violence against LGBTQI+ individuals by appealing to the supposed will of the majority.

Therefore, political homophobia in Georgia had most clearly manifested through the statements of high-ranking officials and in legislative initiatives. Such rhetoric and policymaking not only undermine the safety and dignity of LGBTQI+ individuals, but also legitimize both ideological and physical harassment by homophobic groups.

In this context, recent research conducted in Georgia indicates that homophobic attitudes remain deeply entrenched in society. This persistence is exacerbated by the government's failure to adequately acknowledge the needs of the LGBTQI+ community. Moreover, the use of homophobic hate speech by politicians, coupled with a general lack of recognition from both state institutions and society at large, continues to reinforce discriminatory mindsets and practices.

A 2016 study revealed that attitudes toward individual rights in Georgia were significantly influenced by age and educational attainment. Younger people generally expressed more openness and acceptance. However, the persistence of myths, homophobic stereotypes, and religious fundamentalism continued to play a substantial role.⁴⁴

According to a quantitative study conducted by UNDP in 2020, a significant portion of Georgian society—both men and women—reported that they would feel ashamed if they had a homosexual child. The majority of respondents also expressed the belief that homosexual individuals should not be permitted to work with children. Additionally, many respondents opposed the idea of having a homosexual friend or neighbor. In fact, homosexual individuals ranked third among the most undesirable neighbors.⁴⁵

However, it is important to note that the situation has improved compared to previous years. This suggests that, despite the state's discriminatory policies, Georgian society is gradually becoming more tolerant toward the LGBTQI+ community. Notably, a 2022 study by the Women's Initiatives Supporting Group revealed a 20% decrease over the past five years in the number of respondents who viewed LGBTQI+ activism negatively—falling from 74.5% to 56.8%. Despite that, 53% of respondents still supported legal restrictions on LGBTQI+ individuals' rights to freedom of expression and assembly, this marks a decline from 78.1% in

⁴³ Available online at: <https://wisq.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG-From-Projudice-to-Equality-2022-EN.pdf>, pg. 20.

⁴⁴ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, *From prejudice to equality, Study of Societal Attitudes, Knowledge and Information Regarding the LGBT Community and their Rights in Georgia*. Available at: https://wisq.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG_HomoBiTransPhobia_Study.pdf

⁴⁵ UNDP, *Men, Women, and Gender Relations in Georgia: Public Perceptions and Attitudes*. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/georgia/publications/men-women-and-gender-relations-georgia-public-perceptions-and-attitudes>

2016. The share of those opposing such restrictions has nearly doubled—from 14.6% in 2016 to 27.1% in 2021.⁴⁶ Still, it is noteworthy that in the absence of supportive state policies, these shifts in public opinion have not necessarily translated into positive attitudes, societal views may be evolving from negative to neutral positions.

Lastly, according to research conducted by the Council of Europe, the LGBTQI+ community continues to receive the lowest positive evaluation in terms of their perceived importance in the development of Georgia. A significant portion of respondents stated that protecting LGBTQI+ rights is not important to them. The analysis revealed that several factors influence individual attitudes, particularly gender: men are less likely to support LGBTQI+ rights compared to the rights of religious minorities. Furthermore, respondents who possess more information about minority rights are more likely to recognize the importance of protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals.⁴⁷

The results of these studies reflect the shortcomings of state policy. Educational and informational initiatives aimed at transforming societal attitudes—such as integrating equality topics into the education system and public policy—require strong support. However, public discourse has instead become a primary vehicle for promoting discrimination and hate speech. Even the Public Defender, whose role is to uphold equality, often refrains from openly addressing LGBTQI+ issues.

5. The Influence of Ultra-right and Violent Groups on the State Policy

The Church remains one of the most trusted institutions in Georgia, and its stance on moral issues—particularly regarding sexual orientation and gender identity—significantly shapes public opinion. This environment fuels ultra-right movements, which, in collaboration with religious authorities, frame LGBTQI+ issues as a threat to Georgian identity, culture, and national values. Despite numerous violent acts carried out by these groups, the effective enforcement of justice has consistently been inadequate, fostering the perception that these groups operate with the backing of the government.

It is also important to note that ultra-right groups in Georgia manifest both as politically affiliated parties or individuals and as non-governmental organizations. Among the politically active actors are the “Alliance of Patriots” and “People's Power”. On the non-governmental front, several organizations are active, including Georgian March, Georgian Idea, Georgian Power, Alt-Info, and the Society for the Protection of Children's Rights, among others.

Their main focus lies in promoting nationalist and homophobic rhetoric, which they actively spread through social media and their own media platforms. These platforms are often used to disseminate anti-Western propaganda and incite hatred within society. A vivid example is *Alt-Info*, which for years has been vocal in spreading pro-Russian and homophobic narratives. Although *Alt-Info* ceased broadcasting in 2024, other members of the organization have continued using all available media channels to spread hate and reinforce anti-Western sentiment.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Available online at: <https://wisq.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG-From-Projudice-to-Equality-2022-EN.pdf>

⁴⁷ Council of Europe, 2021. HATE CRIME, HATE SPEECH AND DISCRIMINATION IN GEORGIA: ATTITUDES AND AWARENESS. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/book-eng/1680a583d0>

⁴⁸ Available at: <https://georgia.shafaqna.com/EN/AL/804607>

In 2020, the Democracy Research Institute published a study on the anti-gender rhetoric of ultra-right groups and trends in socials and online media. The findings indicate that in Georgia, ultra-right groups that promote anti-gender narratives also tend to propagate homophobic discourse. These groups frequently accuse various media outlets and non-governmental organizations of engaging in the so-called "promoting of corruption" and "corrupting the nation."⁴⁹

Ultra-right groups are most active during events organized by LGBTQI+ groups or organizations. Their primary methods of mobilization include public protests and counter-demonstrations, especially during events such as IDAHOT, Tbilisi Pride, various conferences, and cultural festivals. These groups often resort to physical attacks, threats of violence, organized aggression, and hate speech—none of which are effectively addressed by the state. This consistent lack of accountability fostered a sense of impunity and failed to deter future violence. Over the years, it has been concerning that public officials frequently portrayed LGBT+ individuals and violent counter-demonstrators' as opposing parties.⁵⁰

Ultimately, in Georgia, the process of ultra-right radicalization and the polarization of LGBTQI+ issues is closely tied to a broader political agenda that is largely discriminatory. The empowerment of violent groups stems from ineffective state policies, which not only neglect LGBTQI+ concerns but also hinder the broader development of public discourse around equality.

6. The Influence of the State Policy on the Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons

In recent years, Georgia's state policy has been increasingly aimed at restricting the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals and excluding them from the social and political spheres. This trend is most apparent in legislative initiatives such as the adoption of the so-called law on "protecting family values and minors." This law has created numerous obstacles for the LGBTQI+ community, not only infringing upon individual rights but also undermining broader social and collective processes.

The enactment of this law has not only resulted in direct violations of LGBTQI+ rights, but it has also legitimized such infringements at the level of state policy. At the individual level, this translates into restrictions on personal liberty, freedom of expression, social security and access to healthcare. At the collective level, it has polarized society, institutionalized discrimination and created an environment in which advocating for LGBTQI+ rights is perceived as "opposing" state-declared values. Furthermore, the law imposes criminal and administrative liability for certain actions, - for instance, healthcare services provided by professionals, addressing LGBTQI+ topics in educational settings, etc.

The following chapter will analyze how these policies affect the legal situation of the LGBTQI+ community, the specific challenges posed by the legislation, and the broader impact on the daily lives of LGBTQI+ individuals. It will also examine how the state's inconsistent approach contributes to rising violence from homophobic groups and the prevalence of hate crimes.

⁴⁹ Democracy Research Institute, 2021. Available at: <https://shorturl.at/jGP00>

⁵⁰ Public Defender of Georgia, THE RIGHTS OF LGBT+ PEOPLE IN GEORGIA, 2021. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/eng/190306081201spetsialuri-angarishebi/lgbt-jgufis-uflebrivi-mdgomareobis-shefaseba-sakartveloshi>

6.1. The Safety and Security

LGBTQI+ organizations in Georgia have recently faced significant challenges regarding safety and security. A homophobic environment has persisted for many years, but the situation worsened during the summer of 2024 when the attacks on the offices of LGBTQI+ organizations and acts of vandalism became increasingly frequent. Between May and June, buildings belonging to non-governmental organizations, as well as the homes of activists, were targeted—splashed with red paint, with eggs and posted with insulting messages directed at LGBTQI+ activists and organizational representatives.

A deep lack of trust in law enforcement agencies has further exacerbated security challenges for LGBTQI+ individuals in Georgia. Activists often face difficulties cooperating with the police, as they fear both direct threats and the unwillingness or inability of law enforcement to ensure their safety. The adoption of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has only worsened the situation, limiting the community's capacity to report acts of violence against them to the authorities. Many activists believe the new law will discourage victims from seeking help, due to fear of worse scenarios or increased societal hostility. This deterioration has undermined the fragile progress that had been made in building trust between the LGBTQI+ community and law enforcement—progress achieved largely through the efforts of non-governmental organizations in recent years.⁵¹ Amid the ongoing political crisis, platforms for dialogue and cooperation have been seized, stalling any potential advancement in this area. Furthermore, violent responses to peaceful demonstrations and incidents of police brutality have significantly undermined public trust.⁵²

Likewise, concerns around safety in public spaces have intensified. Increasingly, activists are avoiding preferred gathering locations and instead opting for alternative venues, choosing to use taxis rather than public transportation to minimize the risk of violence. These adaptations reveal how deeply security concerns are limiting the community's freedom of movement and expression, compelling them to adopt restrictive survival strategies.

Transgender individuals are facing particular challenges. There have been documented cases of verbal abuse in public, as well as physical assaults—two of which escalated into physical attacks.⁵³ During the pre-election period, a transgender woman was assaulted by a member of a political party. Although police responded, the alleged perpetrator was released by the bail. In Batumi, two transgender women were subjected to homophobic threats and verbal abuse, including from police officers. In these circumstances, many victims expressed doubt that reporting the incidents to the Special Investigative Service would result in justice. One of the outcomes of institutionalized political homophobia was the murder of a transgender woman Kesaria Abramidze, who became the victim of brutal violence.⁵⁴

All of this clearly indicates that the safety and security of LGBTQI+ people in Georgia is at an alarming level. Community members are marginalized not only due to the threat of violence

⁵¹ Meeting with the community organizations.

⁵² Georgian young lawyers' association, *Preliminary Findings on the Investigation of Torture and Ill-Treatment Against Protesters in Georgia from 28 November to 20 December 2024*. Available at: <https://gyla.ge/en/post/tsameba-da-araadamianurimopkroba-saerto-gancxadeba>

⁵³ Interviews with the representatives of community organizations.

⁵⁴ Coalition on Equality, statement:

https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=910480041114194&id=100064566197410

but also because state institutions have failed to take appropriate steps to support and protect them. Such an environment highlights the urgent need to prioritize security policies, strengthen legal guarantees, and foster societal support so that LGBTQI+ individuals can feel safe and have the ability to fully exercise their rights in a free and secure environment.

6.2. Access to Healthcare

The latest legislative amendments have had a severely negative impact on healthcare services for the LGBTQI+ community. Under the newly adopted law, transgender individuals are entirely deprived of access to healthcare. The law imposes criminal liability on doctors or other healthcare professionals who provide medical services to LGBTQI+ individuals, banning healthcare procedures that are vital for their health and survival or other manipulations.

Access to healthcare has never been fully available to the LGBTQI+ community in Georgia. State policy has failed to improve the situation over the years, and the absence of national guidelines and protocols has long been a problem. Even discriminatory attitudes within the healthcare system were widespread. Community members often felt compelled to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity—or avoid healthcare services altogether—due to fears of stigma, harassment, or degrading treatment.

Various studies confirm that transgender individuals have faced mistrust from medical personnel, inadequate service provision, and openly hostile attitudes.⁵⁵ In light of the recent legislative changes, even minimal standards of healthcare provision have been challenged.

6.3. Freedom of Expression and Assembly

One of the main challenges faced by the LGBTQI+ community in Georgia is the restriction of freedom of expression and assembly. The newly adopted law prohibits forms of assembly that may relate to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. This effectively eliminates the ability to publicly advocate for the challenges faced by the LGBTQI+ community, including through peaceful demonstrations.

In 2012 and 2013, during the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, LGBTQI+ individuals were subjected to violent attacks.⁵⁶ The state failed to protect their right to free expression and prevent the violence.⁵⁷ The most critical instance occurred on July 5, 2021, when violent groups attacked journalists, human rights defenders, and citizens. The lack of accountability for the organizers of this violence further contributed to a culture of impunity. Law enforcement failed to punish those responsible for organizing violent acts, not only in 2021 but also in previous years.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Equality Movement, *A RESEARCH ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS OF LGBTQI COMMUNITY IN GEORGIA*, 2022. Available at: <https://equality.ge/en/8342>

⁵⁶ Public Defender of Georgia, *THE RIGHTS OF LGBT+ PEOPLE IN GEORGIA*, 2021. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/eng/190306081201spetsialuri-angarishebi/lgbt-jqufis-uflebrivi-mdgomareobis-shefaseba-sakartveloshi>

⁵⁷ Available in Georgian at: <https://wisg.org/ka/news/detail/344/evropuli-sasamartlo-2013-tslis-17-maisis-sakmeze-sakartvelom-konventsii-3-mukhli-daarghvia>

⁵⁸ Public Defender of Georgia, *THE RIGHTS OF LGBT+ PEOPLE IN GEORGIA*, 2021. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/eng/190306081201spetsialuri-angarishebi/lgbt-jqufis-uflebrivi-mdgomareobis-shefaseba-sakartveloshi>

The police's inability to respond effectively has severely impacted the safety of LGBTQI+ activists. Similarly, in 2023, during the Pride event held in Tbilisi, extremist groups targeted the event. The state's response remained inadequate, once again.⁵⁹

6.4. Legal Gender Recognition

Under the anti-LGBT legislation, the possibility of legal gender recognition has been completely prohibited.⁶⁰ Previously, there were no clear legal regulations governing legal gender recognition. The basis for changes in civil status was a “change of sex,” which in practice required individuals to undergo life-threatening and health-compromising surgical procedures to change the gender marker on their official documents.⁶¹

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Georgian government must establish legislative and administrative mechanisms to ensure legal gender recognition for transgender persons, hence protection of private and family life.⁶² However, the newly adopted law fully prohibits any changes to the gender marker in identity documents. This discriminatory legislation not only undermines the fulfillment of Georgia’s international human rights obligations but also completely strips transgender individuals of the ability to legally identify their gender in official records.

6.5. Education and Labour Rights

Recent research reveals that LGBTQI+ individuals in Georgia continue to face various forms of harassment and discrimination within educational institutions. While universities and vocational schools tend to offer a slightly more open environment, homophobic attitudes from some students and professors remain a significant concern.⁶³

Discrimination in the labour market is also widespread. According to a report by the UN Independent Expert, LGBTQI+ community members—particularly transgender individuals—face systemic inequality in employment. The lack of legal gender recognition mechanisms further exacerbates their exclusion, often forcing them into unofficial or exploitative working conditions.⁶⁴

A study by the Women’s Initiatives Supporting Group shows that LGBTQI+ individuals in Georgia struggle to find jobs with dignified conditions. Many are relegated to informal

⁵⁹ Available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/07/08/europe/tbilisi-georgia-anti-lgbtq-pride-festival-intl/index.html>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/09/anti-lgbtq-protesters-break-up-pride-event-in-georgian-capital-tbilisi>

⁶⁰ The law of Georgia on Protection of Family Values and Minors, 2024. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/6283110?publication=0>, article 7.

⁶¹ Public Defender of Georgia, THE RIGHTS OF LGBT+ PEOPLE IN GEORGIA, 2021. Available at: <https://www.ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2022042914343766642.pdf>

⁶² Available at: <https://wisq.org/en/news/detail/363/adamianis-uflebata-evropulma-sasamartlom-genderis-samartlebrivi-aghiarebis-sakmeebze-me-8-mukhlis-darghveva-daadgina>

⁶³ Equality Movement, A RESEARCH ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS OF LGBTQI COMMUNITY IN GEORGIA, 2022. Available at: <https://equality.ge/en/8342>

⁶⁴ Visit to Georgia: Report of the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, 2019. Available at: <https://shorturl.at/gpuX8>

labour with no employment protections, often in the service sector.⁶⁵ The state's discriminatory policies have worsened their already precarious socio-economic conditions, solidifying existing barriers and institutionalizing discrimination in the labour sphere.

Anti-LGBT legislation has had a profound impact on both education and employment opportunities. The law has effectively banned public discussion of LGBTQI+ issues at schools and universities, contributing to the spread of disinformation and reinforcing negative stereotypes. Particularly problematic is the use of vague language like "popularization" in the legislation, which relies on the undefined standard of an "objective observer." The ambiguity of this term makes it unclear what actions are prohibited or who might be such observer. Such a legislative environment not only heightens discrimination but also directly violates LGBTQI+ individuals' rights to education and equal access to the labor market.

Conclusion

Although Georgia made significant steps forward over the past decade by adopting anti-discrimination legislation and aligning with international human rights obligations, the recent eradication of LGBTQI+ issues from state policy and the adoption of discriminatory laws represent a severe regression. Initially, legislative developments—such as the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination—offered hope for progress in Georgia's democratization and EU integration process. However, the amendments made in 2024 have cast serious doubt on sincerity of this law.

In recent years, homophobic rhetoric at the political level has become increasingly common. Senior government officials have publicly supported anti-LGBT legislation, further legitimizing a discriminatory climate. State institutions tasked with promoting gender equality operate from a narrow heteronormative framework, ignoring LGBTQI+ concerns. Particularly concerning is the exclusion of LGBTQI+ issues from the public discourse of the Public Defender—an omission that reflects the broader state policy.

In terms of safety and security, repeated attacks against LGBTQI+ organizations, activists, and community members—most of which have gone unpunished—demonstrate a troubling lack of institutional will and capacity to prevent or investigate hate-motivated crimes. Persistent challenges in healthcare, education, and employment continue to exacerbate the already difficult social conditions faced by the LGBTQI+ community. Furthermore, recent legislative changes have created legal ground for both institutions and individuals to restrict the rights of LGBTQI+ people in a discriminatory manner.

As a result, LGBTQI+ issues in Georgia have been largely suppressed and erased from state policy. This backsliding signals a dangerous trend for Georgia's democratic development—one in which the rights of one of its most marginalized communities are being actively undermined.

⁶⁵ Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, *IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF COVID PANDEMIC ON LGBT(Q)I COMMUNITY*, 2022. Available at: https://wisq.org/Data/docs/publications/research-study/WISG_Covid-impact-on-LGBTQI-community-EN.pdf