

Take a stand for human rights for all: stop discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ persons in Georgia

This joint statement is issued by the United Nations system in Georgia, the Delegation of the European Union to Georgia, the Embassies to Georgia of Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, the European Investment Bank's Regional Representation for the South Caucasus, and the Head of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia

On the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), we celebrate diversity and call for solidarity with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) community in Georgia. LGBTQI+ persons continue to experience prejudice, discrimination, stigma, hostility and violence on a daily basis and are prevented from living their lives in dignity as free and equal members of Georgian society.

We welcome the increase in public support for the protection of minority rights in Georgia, as the number of Georgians stating that LGBTQI+ rights must be protected has doubled since 2015.[1] We also welcome the protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression that Georgia's landmark Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination continues to provide since 2014. We acknowledge the efforts of various state institutions and civil society organizations in ensuring full protection of human rights and freedoms.

We are concerned that despite these efforts, progress has stalled. Newly adopted national policy documents, such as the National Human Rights Strategy 2022-2030, the State Concept of Georgia on Gender Equality and the national development strategy Vision 2030 do not include measures to strengthen protection and inclusion of LGBTQI+ persons. Stigmatization, discriminatory language and hate speech by some public officials, politicians, media and religious figures incite further harassment against LGBTQI+ persons and threaten their lives. Instigators and many perpetrators of open acts of violence against LGBTQI+ individuals in recent years, including during Pride Week in July 2021, have not been brought to justice, thus further limiting the opportunity for LGBTQI+ persons to exercise their right to peaceful assembly.

Exclusion of any member of society perpetuates social, economic and political inequality and injustice for everyone, thus hampering further development of Georgia's democracy. We call upon Georgian state, political, civic and religious leaders to stand up and speak out against hate, discrimination and violence and to work together with the LGBTQI+ communities to ensure full enjoyment of everyone's rights. We call on the Government of Georgia to align state policy and practice with Georgia's international commitments to safeguard the rights of LGBTQI+ persons and to promote an inclusive society where everyone is safe and free to make decisions about their bodies and their lives. As Georgia's international supporters, we stand ready to continue working alongside Georgian partners towards these goals.

[1] Women's Initiatives Support Group (WISG)/SIDA/UNW/UNDP/UNFPA, (2022), 'From Prejudice to Equality: Study on Public Knowledge, Awareness and Attitudes towards LGBTQI+ Community and Legal Equality', retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/3KN7hh3>