

Still Unprotected: Mid-term Review about Protection of LGBT+ Communities in Eastern Europe

Mid-term Review Based on Documented Cases

Prepared by Eastern European Coalition for LGBT+ Equality
October 2026

INTRODUCTION **2**
1. REVIEW BY COUNTRY **3**
1.1 ARMENIA 3
1.2 GEORGIA 5
1.3 UKRAINE 6
1.4 MOLDOVA 8
2. REVIEW SUMMARY FOR FOUR COUNTRIES: ARMENIA, GEORGIA, UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA **10**
3. RUSSIA: STATE AS A MAIN PERPETRATOR **13**
4. RECOMMENDATIONS **15**

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE COALITION

In 2014, the Eastern European Coalition for LGBT+ Equality (hereinafter: Coalition) was established as a non-formal coalition of the country-based organizations to advance LGBT+ rights and equality in the Eastern Partnership region, with the support of a Swedish partner RFSL. This marked the beginning of a collaborative effort to address challenges faced by LGBT+ communities in the Eastern European region.

In 2021, the Coalition underwent a significant transformation and was officially registered in Moldova as the Eastern European Coalition for LGBT+ Equality. It is led by five prominent organizations based in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and constantly works with the partners in the region. The Coalition serves as a platform to amplify voices and support civil society organizations. Together, we reaffirm the commitment to fostering resilience, acceptance, and support for LGBT+ communities across Eastern Europe.

ABOUT THE MID-TERM REVIEW

This mid-term review presents an analysis of the situation across five Eastern European countries based on the documented human rights violation cases towards LGBT+ people. The countries covered within the current report are Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia (in total 80 documented cases), as well as it reflects on the cases occurred in Russia (84 documented cases), as a state constantly politicizing LGBT+ issues and affecting the LGBT+ human rights movements in the region. The data was collected by the Eastern European Coalition for LGBT+ Equality's member organizations and partners. The analysis is based on the human rights violation incidents documented in January-July 2026.

The Coalition’s member organizations based in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine monitored the situation in the region and documented cases of human rights violations against LGBT+ people that were reported directly by the victims or obtained from other sources. Partners contributed to obtaining the data that occurred in Russia.

1. REVIEW BY COUNTRY

1.1 ARMENIA

Context and legislative background

The human rights protection of LGBT+ people in Armenia is not guaranteed and is marked by a strong gap between international commitments and domestic practice. LGBT+ people continue to face discrimination, harassment, and violence, and the atmosphere of impunity prevails. While the European Commission presented a Visa Liberalisation Action Plan requiring reforms on anti-discrimination, LGBT+ protection, and access to justice, implementation on the ground was limited.

The Draft Law on Ensuring Equality ("anti-discrimination" legislation) hasn't been adopted yet and the last draft still fails to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity. The RA criminal code does not explicitly recognize sexual orientation or gender identity as an aggravating circumstance in hate crime cases, leaving the interpretation of the biased motivation of the crimes to the law enforcement bodies which are mostly reluctant to consider the homophobic and transphobic motivation when determining the charges. Fear of facing discrimination and humiliation, fear of the public disclosure of their sexual orientation or gender identity and lack of trust in law enforcement continue to prevent many LGBT+ people from reporting hate crimes. Investigations into such crimes are often inconclusive or ineffective and the charges brought often do not reflect the homophobic and transphobic motives of perpetrators.

The common situation relates to the regulations on hate speech and incitement of violence. The public calls to violence have been criminalized since 2020. However, there have been no filed cases regarding calls to violence or justifying the violence towards LGBT+ people since then, though many reports by the human rights organizations have been presented to the police. The law on preventing domestic violence, adopted in 2017, is also applicable to LGBT+ people who face violence from their family members. The amendments to the law on preventing domestic violence are also positive: the term "partner" was included in the law, creating a mechanism for LGBT+ people who are not in a registered marriage, to protect themselves from partner abuse. However, no reports to law enforcement have been registered so far by LGBT+ partners. Additionally, there are no formal procedures for legal gender recognition in Armenia. As a result, trans people continued to face daily discrimination in employment, healthcare, and access to services.

LGBT+ human rights situation based on the documented cases in Armenia

In the first half of 2026, many human rights violations involving hate crimes, hate speech, gender-based violence, and discrimination against LGBT+ persons were documented in Armenia. The cases were accompanied by violations of one or more human rights. Particularly, human rights violations were recorded of the prohibition of discrimination, the right to private and family life, the prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment, freedom of speech and expression, and the rights to life, education, and liberty and security.

During this period, the most frequently recorded cases were hate crimes against LGBT+ people and cases of gender-based violence. Many hate crimes were recorded against gay and bisexual men, in which the perpetrators, upon learning of the person's sexual orientation, threatened to disclose it and subjected them to blackmail and, in some cases, extortion. For example, *in one case, a gay person met and communicated with a stranger on social media and provided information about their personal life, education, work, and their intimate and sexual life. The stranger then threatened, across several platforms, that unless the person transferred money, the stranger would send the information about them, and the photos they had shared, to their family and workplace. The person did not turn to the police, fearing further disclosure of their sexual orientation and having no trust in the police*. As in this case, none of the gay and bisexual people in the other similar cases turned to the police, for the same reasons.

Other types of hate crime are also categorized as the cases of gender-based violence. In particular, those cases include the harassment and physical assault of trans persons in public places or while providing services. Trans persons turned to the police only in cases of physical violence and threats to their lives. Another case of physical violence in a public place was recorded against a same-sex couple. *A lesbian couple was sitting on the street when a young stranger approached the women, first tried to talk to them, and then attacked the couple, directing sexualized slurs at them in connection with their sexual orientation. The young man's friends then also approached the couple, attacked them, and beat them. They stopped only when residents of a nearby building threatened to call the police, but none of those residents intervened in stopping the violence itself. The women filed a report with the police, but law enforcement officers tried in every way to delay the course of the investigation.*

It should be noted that in two similar cases during this period, the perpetrator was a representative of the law enforcement bodies. In both cases, police officers detained the individuals under the pretext of conducting a drug search and subjected them to ridicule and degrading treatment on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity, and in one case also to sexual harassment. In these cases, the individuals did not wish to file a complaint against the law enforcement bodies, as they had no basic confidence that the officers would be punished.

Other recorded cases of gender-based violence involve domestic violence, partner abuse and sexual harassment against LGBT+ people, which rank second in frequency. For example, *in one case, a trans woman was subjected to physical and psychological violence by her mother and other family members for more than four years. Her family members repeatedly beat her, and several times forced her to undergo conversion therapy. Only in 2026, after another*

incident of violence, did she turn to the police, demanding protection. At the police station, the trans woman was treated with contempt, mockery, and humiliation, and employees from various departments of the station were called in to look at her. In the end, however, the police did provide protection from the family members. Of the cases recorded in this period, this is the only one in which the person turned to the police. In the other recorded cases of domestic violence, partner abuse, and sexual harassment, LGBT+ people avoided turning to the police, having no confidence that they would not be subjected to discriminatory and insulting treatment, or that their complaints would be acted upon.

During this period, cases involving discrimination were also recorded in Armenia, in which people's personal data were published on public platforms, accompanied by a wave of hate speech. There were cases of bullying in an educational institution, as well as dismissals from work on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or association. In only one of these cases did the parent of a minor gay person who had been bullied turn to the police, but they encountered a discriminatory approach. In none of the other cases did the persons turn to law enforcement bodies, as they did not have sufficient trust in the system.

1.2 GEORGIA

Context and legislative background

The LGBT+ human rights have significantly deteriorated in Georgia, following the adoption and enforcement of cascade of restrictive legislation, while the environment for LGBT+ people has grown more hostile and polarised, driven by state-aligned disinformation, anti-Western narratives, legal pressures on civil society, and rising anti-LGBT+ rhetoric.

Back in 2024, parliament adopted anti-LGBT+ amendments to the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors imposing discriminatory restrictions on rights to education, health, freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly. It bans legal gender recognition, criminalizes gender-affirming healthcare, restricts assemblies and expression, and frames LGBT+ people as a threat to children, has placed the community at life-threatening risk. They also prohibit positive references to LGBT people in literature, film, and media, as well as in schools and at public gatherings.

Georgia used to have an anti-discrimination legislation and hate crime provisions where sexual orientation and gender identity were explicitly mentioned as the protective grounds. However, "gender" and "gender identity" have recently been removed from anti-discrimination and hate crime provisions.

LGBT+ people, especially the trans community in Georgia, as the most vulnerable group, are facing an existential physical security crisis, prompting increased emigration and requests for international protection. Hate crimes remain a serious problem, while official statistics continue to underreport the scale of violence due to delays in investigations, failures to grant victims formal status, and limited sensitivity among police and prosecutors.

The adoption of restrictive laws targeting civil society and the media, including the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, the Foreign Agents Registration Act, and amendments to the Law on Grants, has fundamentally undermined freedoms, weakened independent human rights monitoring, and contributed to the near disappearance of operational space for CSOs. Moreover, the Anti-Corruption Bureau's expanded oversight, and the new Law on Grants tightly restricted foreign funding and subjected NGOs to intrusive monitoring. The new amendments broaden the definition of a "Grant", extending it to cover almost any financial or non-financial assistance. They also introduce a requirement for prior government authorization before such funding can be provided and impose severe penalties, including lengthy prison sentences, for noncompliance. This has further deepened fear and uncertainty among activists, service providers, and LGBT+ community members, particularly in a context where years of unaddressed anti-LGBT+ violence and lack of accountability have served as a testing ground for state-enabled hate campaigns, normalizing violence, delaying investigations, and reinforcing impunity.

LGBT+ human rights situation based on the documented cases in Georgia

In the first half of 2026, several cases of human rights violations against LGBT+ people were documented in Georgia. The number of documented cases may be conditioned by legislation in Georgia that restricts the expression of LGBT+ people and the activities and resources of civil society organizations, which is a significant obstacle to accessibility.

Nevertheless, during this period, cases of hate crime and gender-based violence were documented, accompanied by violations of the prohibition of discrimination, the rights to private and family life, freedom of speech and expression, and the right to be free from torture and inhuman and degrading treatment.

In one of the cases, a hate crime was committed against a gay person. *The person was robbed in a public place, where strangers who approached the person ostensibly to help identified the person's sexual orientation, attacked and physically assaulted them, and directed insults related to their sexual orientation and hate speech at them. After the incident, the person turned to the police, but the police initially did not consider the discrimination and hate motive related to sexual orientation and gave the appropriate classification only after the organization intervened within the case.*

In another case, *a trans person was followed in a public place by strangers who made remarks, insults, and threats related to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The person managed to get away from the offenders but did not wish to turn to the police, having no trust in the law enforcement system.* In another case of gender-based violence, *a woman's same-sex sexual orientation was used by her partner to blackmail her and to restrict her parental rights. The woman turned only to the organization for support.*

1.3 UKRAINE

Context and legislative background

The LGBT+ human rights protection in Ukraine is a combination of a mix of judicial progress, legislative uncertainty, and growing international pressure.

Back in 2025, a Kyiv district court recognised a same-sex couple as a de facto family after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to acknowledge a diplomat's partner. The ruling was later upheld by the Kyiv Court of Appeal, marking one of the most consequential judicial acknowledgments of same-sex family life in the country. While the decision does not legalise same-sex marriage or civil partnerships, it establishes a precedent for limited legal recognition through the courts, offering practical protections in specific cases. Despite, proposed amendments to the Civil Code in 2025 increase the risk of undermining the recent progress. Draft legislation reportedly defines family and marital unions strictly in opposite-sex terms and introduces vague moral standards that may restrict judicial flexibility. Such provisions could weaken protections for same-sex couples and create broader legal uncertainty. In 2026, the Civil Code amendments haven't passed the second hearing yet.

On health and policy, Ukraine adopted a norm guaranteeing non-discriminatory access to medical services in its 2030 health strategy, while monitoring groups reported limited legislative progress despite inclusion of LGBT+ protections in the EU accession roadmap. Ukraine still lacks explicit hate-crime aggravating circumstances based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Two draft laws, proposing amendments to criminal legislation to address crimes motivated by hate or discrimination and introducing same-sex partnerships, remained pending in parliament.

Violence and threats against activists persist in the country, and comprehensive legal recognition for same-sex couples remain unresolved. In occupied territories, the situation is not promising: Russian-imposed legal frameworks, including bans on so-called "non-traditional relations," created direct risks for LGBT+ people living under occupation.

LGBT+ human rights situation based on the documented cases in Ukraine

In the first half of 2026, cases of hate crimes and hate speech against LGBT+ people and organizations were documented in Ukraine, along with a state-initiated legislative change aimed at restricting the human rights of LGBT+ people and same-gender couples. The cases were accompanied by violations of one or more human rights, in particular human rights violations of the prohibition of discrimination, the right to private and family life, freedom of speech and expression, and freedom of assembly and association.

During this period, attacks or threats against LGBT+ people, LGBT+ activists, organizations, and LGBT+-friendly spaces were documented as cases of hate crime. In one case, *unknown persons repeatedly targeted an LGBT+ organization, leaving threatening and warning notes and leaflets. The organization reported the matter to the police, but the case is still ongoing*. In another case, *a bookstore was repeatedly targeted: unknown persons put threatening leaflets on its windows and entered the premises and filmed, with the aim of intimidating the staff and the guests present, including LGBT+ people.* In one of the cases, *an LGBT+-friendly bar was also targeted when unknown persons left blood and severed pigs' heads at the entrance, accompanied by threatening notes. This incident was preceded by physical attacks on the bar's staff, the disclosure of information about the premises, the appearance of masked individuals around the premises, and other similar incidents. A complaint was submitted to the police, and it is still being processed.*

During this period in Ukraine, the new revision of the Civil Code was also a state initiative restricting human rights. It contains provisions that discriminate against and exclude LGBT+ people, and it restricts women's rights, particularly in cases of domestic violence. In particular, the proposed amendments introduce the concepts of "morality" and "common sense," define the family as a union of a man and a woman, and define marriage and partnership as exclusively heterosexual. As a result, there is a risk that basic human rights of LGBT+ couples relating to healthcare, inheritance, representation, and property may be restricted.

Several cases of attacks towards the LGBT+ activists were documented during the period as well. LGBT+ activists were among those involved in the public protests and actions organized by civil society against the new revision of the Civil Code. They were targeted and attacked specifically on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. In addition to the attacks, the recorded cases were accompanied by hate speech directed at the activists. The activists turned to the police, who initially refused to accept the complaint and accepted it only after they insisted.

1.4 MOLDOVA

Context and legislative background

The LGBT+ human rights protection in Moldova is accompanied with some legislative measures and unsteady public discourse around LGBT+ issues. The country has anti-discrimination legislation in place, which provides protection against discrimination, including based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The law on Ensuring Equality prohibits any form of discrimination in the areas of employment, education, healthcare, services, and other sectors, explicitly mentioning sexual orientation and gender identity in the list of protected criteria. However, it is lacking intersex status as one of the protected grounds.

According to report, published by GENDERDOC-M Information Centre in 2025, anti-LGBT+ narratives are frequently weaponised in political competition. Parties and public

figures frame equality demands as a foreign imposition or a threat to "traditional values," turning minority rights into a symbolic battleground. Monitoring of election campaigns documented a surge of hostile messaging, especially online, where social media platforms amplify disinformation and hate speech with limited accountability. Public attitudes remain marked by high levels of social distance. Many LGBT+ individuals continue to conceal their identities to avoid stigma, harassment, or professional consequences.

Bias-motivated violence against LGBT+ people remains a persistent issue in Moldova. Members of the community report experiencing harassment, intimidation, blackmail, and physical attacks. The effects of these incidents extend beyond the individuals targeted, fostering a wider atmosphere of fear and insecurity among LGBT+ people as a whole. Although the existing legislation prescribes penalties for hate crimes and incitement to discrimination, many cases are either never reported or not properly investigated. Victims often distrust law enforcement, fear being stigmatized, or worry about being re-traumatized by the process itself. Consequently, the actual extent of bias-motivated violence is considerably understated, and the available protection mechanisms are seldom applied in practice. Activists and human rights defenders continuously face smear campaigns and online abuse, including coordinated attacks targeting prominent advocates such as Angelica Frolov.

Hate speech falls under the Criminal Code, which treats prejudice-based motives, including those tied to sexual orientation and gender identity, as an aggravating circumstance. Article 346 of the Criminal Code likewise penalizes deliberate acts that incite hatred on grounds that include sexual orientation and gender identity. In practice, however, these provisions are applied only to a limited extent. The police and prosecution service seldom treat cases of incitement to discrimination, harassment, or threats as hate-motivated, even where there are clear signs of a discriminatory motive.

LGBT+ human rights situation based on the documented cases in Moldova

In the first half of 2026, cases of hate speech, hate crimes, and discrimination against LGBT+ people were documented in Moldova. The cases were accompanied by one or more human rights violations, such as the prohibition of discrimination, freedom of speech and expression, protection of reputation and honour, education, freedom of assembly and association, and the right to private and family life.

During this period, the most frequently documented ones were the cases of hate speech, incitement to discrimination, and the spread of disinformation against LGBT+ people. These were spread by state officials and public figures and circulated in the media and on social networks, in some cases also targeting LGBT+ activist Angelica Frolov and others. Thus, *in June, after the Chisinau Pride March, the Mayor of Chisinau, Ion Ceban, published a public video statement in which he criticized the march, stating that "marches, propaganda and any form of promotion of homosexuals" are prohibited in Chisinau. However, the claim was disinformation, since the march is an exercise of freedom of assembly. Ion Ceban stated that "power comes to an end" and that "someone will have to answer" for protecting the demonstration or providing conditions for it.* This wording may be perceived as a veiled threat against the institutions and individuals who ensured the lawful exercise of freedom of assembly.

In another case, *an opposition member of the Moldovan Parliament, Alexandru Verșinin, referred to gender expression in a mocking and labelling manner while a proposal to amend anti-discrimination regulations was being discussed. He then spread the disinformation that individuals dressed in women's clothing could enter women's changing rooms and that women would not be able to respond with physical violence without being punished.* His statements associated the protection of trans people and people with diverse gender expressions with an alleged threat to women and children and included a reference that trivialised physical violence against them. It should be noted that hate speech and disinformation voiced by state officials and by political and public figures reach a larger audience, thereby contributing to the increase of an intolerant atmosphere.

During this period, other cases were also recorded of publications and videos spreading disinformation being published and circulated, accompanied by the spread of hate speech. For example, in one case, *a fake video was produced using artificial intelligence and circulated on various social media platforms. In it, the voice of the Executive Director of the GENDERDOC-M Information Centre is used to announce the participation of cleric Petru in the Pride March and his belonging to the LGBT+ community. The Executive Director of GENDERDOC-M made no such statements, and the organisation did not announce the participation of the person concerned in Moldova Pride*. The unauthorised use of the image and voice of a human rights defender to fabricate public and political statements constitutes digital harassment, disinformation, and a reputational attack connected to her work in the field of LGBT+ human rights.

Cases of hate crime against LGBT+ people were also documented in Moldova during the period. In several cases, *different gay persons were invited on dates through a dating app and then subjected to blackmail or extortion under the threat of making their sexual orientation public.* In another documented case, *a young gay man was subjected to harassment and threats on an online platform, after which some young people living in his neighbourhood learned of his sexual orientation. A group of young men near his home then physically assaulted him on the grounds of his sexual orientation.* In only one of the hate crime cases did the person turn to the police and a criminal case was opened; in the other cases, the persons did not apply to law enforcement bodies.

Four cases of gender-based violence were also documented during the period. Two of the cases concern ongoing violence by family members against gay and trans+ persons, and the other two concern public harassment, insults, and humiliation of trans+ and non-binary persons. In one of these cases, the perpetrators were representatives of the law enforcement system themselves. Other cases of abuse of position and discrimination by law enforcement against lesbian and trans+ persons were also documented during this period. Only in one case did a trans+ person file a complaint.

During this period, cases of direct and indirect discrimination in the field of education were also recorded in Moldova. In one case, *a person was bullied at an educational institution because of their sexual orientation*. In another case, research data were published on a biased methodological basis, presenting the LGBT+ pride march in an undesirable context.

Anti-LGBT gatherings and public messages ahead of the June march were also recorded.

2. REVIEW SUMMARY FOR FOUR COUNTRIES: ARMENIA, GEORGIA, UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA

In the first half of 2026, member organizations in four countries of the region (Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia) documented 80 incidents of human rights violations against LGBT+ people. The documented cases do not reflect the full picture of violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in these countries and are limited to cases monitored by local human rights organizations or reported to them by beneficiaries. However, the documented cases make it possible to form an idea of the nature of human rights violations against LGBT+ people in these countries, the patterns of the situation in the region, and the climate of protection. Of the 80 recorded cases, the most frequent was hate speech against LGBT+ people (44% of documented cases), followed by hate crimes (25% of documented cases) and cases of gender-based violence (20% of documented cases). Other violations involving discrimination were also documented (25% of documented cases). It should be noted that a single case often combines several of the types listed above.

The cases documented in the region were accompanied by one or more human rights violations of LGBT+ people, such as the prohibition of discrimination, the right to private and family life, the prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and association, protection of reputation and honor, and the rights to life, education, and liberty and security.

Most of the documented incidents are categorized as hate speech cases and fall to those documented in Moldova, where many cases of hate speech, incitement to discrimination, and the spread of disinformation against LGBT+ people were detected. These were spread by state officials and public figures and circulated in the media and on social networks, in some cases also targeting LGBT+ activists. Cases of targeting of LGBT+ activists, accompanied by hate speech, were also recorded in Ukraine during public protests and actions organized by civil society against the new revision of the Civil Code. Cases of hate speech were also recorded in Armenia, where the personal data of LGBT+ persons were published on public platforms, accompanied by a wave of hate speech.

Hate crimes against LGBT+ people were recorded in all four countries, but there are both similarities and differences in how they manifest in different contexts. Thus, the hate crimes recorded in Ukraine concern attacks and threats against LGBT+ people, LGBT+ activists, organizations, and LGBT+-friendly spaces. People and premises were repeatedly targeted by unknown individuals. Meanwhile, in Moldova, Armenia, and Georgia, cases of attacks on LGBT+ persons in public places were observed, with trans+ and non-binary persons and lesbian couples being particularly vulnerable. Strangers attacked or harassed people on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression.

Among the recorded hate crime cases, a similarity is observed between Armenia and Moldova. In both countries, cases were recorded in which gay and bisexual persons were

subjected to harassment, blackmail, or extortion under the threat of disclosure of their sexual orientation. In these cases, the perpetrators obtained information about the persons' sexual orientation through social networks or dating apps. Another similarity is that the perpetrators of hate crimes or discrimination were police officers or other representatives of the law enforcement system themselves. On suspicion of possessing drugs, they approached or detained individuals, displaying mocking, degrading, sarcastic, and discriminatory treatment and remarks related to the persons' sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression. In one of the cases recorded in Armenia, the degrading treatment by law enforcement bodies was even accompanied by sexual harassment.

Most of the recorded cases of gender-based violence falls to those recorded in Armenia, but the same pattern is also found in Moldova and Georgia. In three countries, cases of ongoing violence by family members against LGBT+ people were recorded, and in Armenia and Georgia, cases of partner abuse were also documented. Another type of gender-based violence is attacks, harassment, and violence against trans+ persons in three countries. In Armenia, cases of violence against lesbian couples were also recorded. Cases of sexual violence and harassment during this period were found only in the cases documented in Armenia.

In addition to the cases listed above, other violations involving discrimination against LGBT+ people were also documented. During this period, Ukraine stood out for a state initiative restricting human rights, namely the new revision of the Civil Code, which contains provisions that discriminate against and exclude LGBT+ people and restricts women's rights, particularly in cases of domestic violence. The proposed amendments may restrict some human rights of LGBT+ couples relating to healthcare, inheritance, representation, and property. In Moldova and Armenia, cases of human rights violations involving discrimination were also observed in the field of education and in the workplace. In Moldova, cases of anti-LGBT gatherings and public messages were recorded as well.

Access to the Law Enforcement System

In the four countries, turning to the law enforcement system in cases of human rights violations is not a frequent practice and is accompanied by distrust or avoidance. Nevertheless, there are cases of turning to the law enforcement bodies, relating to attacks and threats against LGBT+ activists, organizations, or premises, as well as to those cases of hate crime and gender-based violence that involve physical violence against LGBT+ people, assaults, and immediate threats to life and health. However, even in these cases, law enforcement bodies were recorded as being reluctant to consider the hate and discrimination motive, artificially delaying proceedings, or displaying discriminatory, mocking, and degrading treatment. Only in a few cases was proper support and organization of an investigation recorded, often through the intervention or presence of a human rights organization or a human rights defender.

In almost all remaining cases, the persons did not turn to law enforcement bodies for the following main reasons:

- Distrust of the police and the law enforcement system,
- Ineffective investigation and delays in investigations,
- Fear of disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity,
- Avoiding additional discriminatory, insulting, and degrading treatment.

In Moldova and Armenia, cases of abuse of position and discrimination against LGBT+ people by representatives of the law enforcement bodies themselves were also documented. It should be noted that in cases of this kind, only one person filed a complaint, in Moldova. In the remaining cases, the people refused to file a complaint.

3. RUSSIA: STATE AS A MAIN PERPETRATOR

Context and legislative background

Pressure on LGBT+ people in the Russian Federation has intensified, as the authorities have broadened the legal, political, and technological means they use to suppress LGBT+ people and organizations. It is no longer confined to isolated legal restrictions or conservative rhetoric but has developed into a wider political campaign that links anti-LGBT+ policies to attacks on women's rights, independent media, and civil society.

State-sponsored homophobia began in the 2000s, but it escalated after 2022 with new laws that increasingly curtailed the rights and freedoms of LGBT+ people, organizations, and associations. The scope and enforcement of the existing "gay propaganda" ban were widened. Police brought charges against individuals, television channels, streaming services, bookstores, and online marketplaces that offered books on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as against public spaces popular among LGBT+ people. Censorship and self-censorship became more visible across Russian media and cultural institutions. References to LGBT+ issues have gradually disappeared from public platforms as companies and publishers attempt to avoid legal penalties under the country's "LGBT propaganda" laws. Online platforms, publishers, and bookstores have faced administrative and criminal cases and heavy fines.

The authorities also extended the laws on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations" and used them to target media outlets, human rights defenders, and other critics. People and organizations labelled "foreign agents" are barred from accessing income from intellectual property, property sales or rentals, and investment returns. They are also prohibited from any education-related activity and from receiving municipal support or "socially oriented NGO" status, which grants reduced taxation and other benefits. The laws can also be related to international organizations.

At the same time, the state continues to misuse "extremism" and "terrorism" laws to undermine freedom of association. In 2023, the Supreme Court of Russia declared LGBT+

movement as an “extremist organization”. The decision of the Supreme Court equates any activities associated with LGBT+ movement as extremism under the federal law “On countering extremist activities”. By May 2026 there are at least 23 individuals involved in criminal cases opened before the Court and 4 judgments on LGBT+ extremism.

Civil society organizations have been among the most direct targets of state action. Between January and May 2026, 9 LGBT+ organizations have already been designated as “extremist organizations,” including Russian LGBT+ Network, Samara-based public organization “Irida,” LGBTQ group “Coming out”, the Resource Center for LGBT+ people in Yekaterinburg, the association and media “Parni Plus,” and Moscow Community Center for LGBTQ+ Initiatives and more. This constitutes a systemic practice that is likely to affect all LGBT+ organizations connected to Russia, irrespective of whether they operate within the country or in exile. Moreover, these steps eliminate the remaining infrastructure of LGBT+ advocacy and support within the country.

Even though pressure has increased, official figures seem to indicate that discrimination cases are not there. At the same time, human rights organizations encounter difficulties in gathering evidence, supporting victims, and staying in contact with communities throughout the country.

LGBT+ human rights situation based on the documented cases in Russia

In the first half of 2026, 84 incidents of human rights violations against LGBT+ people and organizations were documented in Russia. Of the 84 documented cases, the most common were cases of discrimination (85% of documented cases), followed by hate crimes (8% of documented cases) and hate speech (13% of documented cases). In some cases, incidents involving a combination of discrimination and hate speech (4% of documented cases) or discrimination and hate crimes (2% of documented cases) were also recorded.

The cases documented in the country were accompanied by one or more human rights violations against LGBT+ peoples and organizations. Violations were recorded of the following human rights: the prohibition of discrimination, fair trial and access to justice, private and family life, freedom of speech and expression, freedom of assembly and association, protection of reputation and honor, liberty and security, participation in cultural life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the prohibition of torture and inhuman treatment.

The majority of discrimination cases (86% of documented discrimination cases) consist of the systemic administrative and judicial application of legislation restricting the rights of LGBT+ people and associations operating in the country, against individuals, organizations, or online publications. The remaining discrimination cases consist of denunciations or additions to lists of “undesirable persons” or “extremists.” In all cases involving discrimination, human rights violations are carried out by the State itself, as a form of systemic oppression.

The environment of restriction, persecution, and oppression created in the country also provides fertile ground for the spread of hate speech and for impunity for hate crimes towards LGBT+ people. The hate crimes against LGBT+ people documented in this period were

committed both by representatives of the State (at least 3 cases recorded), namely law enforcement officers and representatives of penitentiary institutions, and by unknown persons, accompanied by physical attacks and cases of extortion against LGBT+ people. Hate speech against LGBT+ people was spread both by individuals and organizations, and in the form of coordinated online attacks and denunciations.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this mid-term review point to several priority areas for human rights monitoring and advocacy to ensure maximum protection of the human rights of LGBT+ people. We recommend the following:

To State Actors

For the region:

- Adopt hate crime legislation explicitly listing sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics and/or adopt comprehensive mechanisms of implementing the existing regulations
- Document and maintain statistics on hate crimes in the countries, including crimes committed on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation and/gender identity/expression, enhancing the visibility of the issues around hate crimes
- Ensure effective investigation and prosecution of violence, harassment, and discrimination against LGBT+ people, and ending impunity for both state and non-state perpetrators
- Ensure access to justice for victims and establish independent complaint mechanisms for victims who experience police indifference or hostility
- Carry out training for law enforcement bodies on the substantive, legal and procedural aspects of the investigation of hate crimes, discrimination and hate speech against LGBT+ people to ensure a complete, objective and comprehensive investigation
- Establish sanctioning mechanisms for SOGI-based hate speech by public officials and political figures

For Georgia:

- Immediately repealing the discriminatory and degrading Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, together with all related legislative amendments that restrict the human rights of LGBT+ people
- Reinstating "gender" and "gender identity" as protected grounds in anti-discrimination, hate-crime, and equality legislation, in line with international

human rights standards

For Russia:

- Lift the designation of the "International LGBT movement" as extremist and securing the release of individuals prosecuted under that designation.
- Revoke the expanded "gay propaganda" law (2022) banning information on so-called non-traditional relations and repealing the 2023 anti-trans legislation prohibiting gender-affirming care and legal gender recognition.
- End state censorship of LGBT+ expression, including the banning of books, films, and online content, the blocking of LGBT+ resources and support services, and the prosecution of journalists, artists, and activists for LGBT+ related speech.

To International and Regional Organizations and Partners

- Closely monitor whether the countries in the region are meeting their international obligations on the human rights of LGBT+ people
- Issue formal public statements affirming that protecting the human rights of LGBT+ people in these countries is important and should be treated as a priority
- Raise in international and regional human rights reports the entrenched pattern of violations against LGBT+ people documented in the reports and reviews submitted by the Coalition.
- Call on states to give clear information about how the cases of concern submitted by NGOs are being investigated, and about the steps taken in response

Disclaimer: *This review is based exclusively on data documented by the Eastern European Coalition for LGBT+ Equality. The findings reflect the documented cases in the dataset and do not represent a comprehensive survey of all human rights violations affecting LGBT+ people in the five covered countries. Case counts and percentages are based on the 164-row dataset as provided and are subject to the data quality limitations noted in the text.*



Still Unprotected: Mid-term Review about Protection of LGBT+ Communities in Eastern Europe
Mid-term Review Based on Documented Cases, October 2026
Published by Eastern European Coalition for LGBT+ Equality