



**The Monitoring of Repression
and Discrimination Against Belarusian
LGBTQ+ Community in 2024**

TG House, 2025

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Introduction

In previous monitoring reports, we have noted that the deteriorating human rights situation in Belarus over the past years has inevitably affected LGBTQ+ individuals. However, in 2024, repression and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community in the country reached a new level: persecution impacted individuals both in law enforcement practices and at the level of state policy.

In the 2023 repression monitoring report, TG House predicted that the situation would deteriorate further. This forecast is confirmed by numerous statements from officials announcing increased control, amendments to legislative acts, and the promotion of the "spiritual and moral" narrative, as well as "traditional values."

The issue of information gathering and the operation of third-sector organizations in Belarus remains critical, as they have been completely liquidated by the authorities. The persistence and intensification of the trend of using "extremist" designations for media outlets and civil initiatives by the authorities also remains a pressing concern.

In 2024 the authorities intensified repression against LGBTQ+ individuals, who faced detentions and arrests while being forced to participate in defamatory and humiliating "confession videos" that tarnished their dignity and honor. These videos were actively circulated on pro-government channels and were accompanied by dehumanizing comments aimed at such individuals.

The year 2024 was a pre-election year, which many linked to the intensification of repression in all spheres of people's lives. However, we believe that no improvement of the situation should be expected after the elections: the repression will continue as long as Alexander Lukashenko remains in power.

1. Legislation and legal changes

By the Resolution No. 24 of the Ministry of Culture dated March 19th, 2024, amendments were made to the instruction "On erotic products, products containing elements of erotica, violence and cruelty, products related to sexual education and upbringing, as well as products of a sexual nature."

The amendments address the definition of pornography, introducing the concept of "non-traditional sexual relationships" and providing a detailed description of what is meant by these "non-traditional sexual relationships." According to the revised definition, "non-traditional sexual relationships and/or sexual behavior" include: sexual relations between individuals of the same sex (homosexuality, lesbianism), an individual engaging in sexual relations with people of different sexes (bisexual relationships), an individual simultaneously engaging in relations with multiple people of the same or different sexes (polyamory), relations involving individuals under the age of 18 (pedophilia), relations between a human and an animal (zoophilia), relations between a human and a human or animal corpse (necrophilia), as well as sexual behavior involving immobilization, infliction of pain, and humiliation of a partner (sadism), experiencing pain from a partner (masochism), watching naked individuals and/or individuals engaged in sexual activities (voyeurism), repeated or persistent tendencies to expose one's genitals to strangers (usually of the opposite sex) or in public places without intent to engage in intimate contact (exhibitionism), wearing clothes of the opposite sex primarily to achieve sexual arousal and create the image of an individual of the opposite sex (fetishistic transvestism), and the desire to live and be perceived by others as a person of the opposite sex, usually accompanied by discomfort with one's anatomical sex or a feeling of incongruence with one's gender identity (transsexualism).

As noted by human rights defenders from the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the most concerning aspect of the updated definition of pornography is the criterion of "not conforming to moral standards" and how it will be applied to "non-traditional sexual relationships and/or sexual behavior." There is every reason to believe that not only explicitly vulgar or naturalistic depictions but any expressions of non-conventional sexual practices will be deemed as "not conforming to moral standards."

Human rights defenders also emphasize that, in effect, Belarusian legislation has equated homosexuality with pedophilia, zoophilia, and necrophilia — crimes under the law. This contributes to the reinforcement of social stigma and, consequently, the legitimization of violence against the LGBTQ+ community.

In the [review](#) published by Belarusian PEN in December 2024, it is stated that the Ministry of Information compiled a "list of printed publications containing informational messages and/or materials, the distribution of which may harm the national interests of the Republic of Belarus."

On November 16th, it became known that books featuring LGBTQ+ characters began to disappear from online stores. Titles such as "A Little Life" and "The People in the Trees" by Hanya Yanagihara, "The Song of Achilles" by Madeline Miller, and "Giovanni's Room" by James Baldwin were no longer available.

The review emphasizes that "there is no legislative ban on such books in Belarus."

2. State policy

At the end of 2023, it became known that Belarus was in the process of approving a draft law providing for administrative liability for the "promotion of non-traditional relationships and voluntary refusal to have children." On February 9th, 2024, at a joint meeting of the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic, Prosecutor General **Andrei Shved** announced that, "at the initiative of the prosecutor's office", a draft law had been prepared to introduce administrative liability for the promotion of "non-traditional family relationships." As announced, the document will establish administrative penalties for the promotion of "abnormal relationships, pedophilia, and voluntary refusal to have children", Shved stated.

In February 2024, the association of former law enforcement officers, BelPol, reported that the Code of Administrative Offenses (CAO) is expected to be supplemented with Articles 19.14, titled "Promotion of Homosexual Relationships or Gender Change", and 19.16, titled "Promotion of Childlessness." According to BelPol, a violation of Article 19.14 will be punishable by a fine of up to 20 base units for individuals, up to 100 base units for individual entrepreneurs, and from 100 to 150 base units for legal entities.

The Chairperson of the Council of the Republic, **Natalya Kochanova**, stated in an interview with the YouTube channel "Minsk-Moscow | Live Broadcast" on July 22nd that one of the key areas of cooperation with Russia is the defense of "traditional values." Kochanova added that during the review of the National Security Concept, which was approved in April 2024, it was specifically stated that marriage is a union "between a man and a woman by birth", which, according to her, is "very important."

"I am not a prude. I am not going to **stigmatize those people who have certain deviations**. No. Why would I? You know, life is a complicated thing. But what has been traditional for us — we must defend our interests", Kochanova stated.

On May 23rd, Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister **Igor Petrishenko**, ahead of a meeting of the National Commission on Children's Rights, stated that the Belarusian Law on the Rights of the Child would be amended in response to "challenges and threats primarily related to the promotion of non-traditional relationships."

According to the official, the need to "adapt the regulatory framework" arises from the fact that the current law has been in effect for more than 30 years, with the last amendments made in 2016.

"We must submit this document to the government in September and present it for consideration by our parliament in December. Therefore, we will thoroughly analyze and prepare the necessary adjustments within the framework of the national commission and relevant ministries to further protect our children under current conditions. We will respond to challenges that come not from within but from outside", said Petrishenko.

The head of Alexander Lukashenko's administration, **Dmitry Krutoy**, during the Republican Socio-Cultural Action "Unity Marathon" in Mogilev on November 23, described Western values as "complete moral decay and degradation."

"The most frightening thing is that all this filth and vulgarity are being poured onto the heads of children and teenagers, convincing them that it is absolutely normal to change their gender in kindergarten, participate in some LGBT transitions, imitate animals, and support childfree ideas or radical feminism", he added.

Krutoy stated that "in reality, all of this is part of the larger ideology of Western globalism, where no countries, no nations, no culture, and no traditions are needed." He further claimed, "It is better for them to have one gray mass that is easier to govern and control. This is what we must fight against with all the strength we have", the official said.

3. Persecution and violence

In 2024, there were mass detentions of LGBTQ+ individuals. In Belarus, between 15 to 20 members of the LGBTQ+ community were detained in September alone, and by November, the number had risen to **more than 30 detainees, including at least eight transgender individuals**.

The majority of them were subjected to fabricated administrative charges of "hooliganism", while two individuals faced criminal charges under Article 343 of the Criminal Code (production and distribution of pornographic materials or items of a pornographic nature). This article is being used as a tool for the persecution of the LGBTQ+ community.

In recent years, transgender people have become one of the most vulnerable groups within the LGBTQ+ community in Belarus. In the fall of 2024, "raids" targeting transgender individuals were conducted across the country, resulting in numerous documented cases of persecution against transgender people.

1. At the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024, **a transgender man** in Minsk, who had previously successfully changed his documents to reflect a male gender marker, faced pressure from state authorities. Without specific legal grounds or explanations, he was forcibly called for a re-evaluation commission to review the previously approved decision regarding his document change. Authorities insisted on annulling his current documents and reinstating the female gender marker. Simultaneously, attempts were made to deprive him of his parental rights, despite the absence of any legal grounds or violations on his part.

The man, who is the father of four children, was forced to leave the country due to increasing pressure and the threat of losing his legal rights.

2. On November 30th, 2023, and February 22nd, 2024, **a transgender woman** from a regional city faced humiliation and threats from passport office employees while submitting documents for passport renewal. During the application process, officials displayed biased attitudes and exerted psychological pressure based on her gender identity.

On April 24th, 2024, she began receiving calls from unknown numbers demanding that she reappear at the passport office. The calls were accompanied by threats of arrest if she refused to comply. The next day, she was detained near her home by law enforcement officers who did not identify themselves, used physical force, and humiliated and insulted her due to her gender identity. During the detention, they also conducted a forced inspection of her personal mobile phone.

As a result, she was forced to emigrate from Belarus.

3. On January 31st, 2024, **a transgender woman** was detained on charges of allegedly storing "extremist materials." During her detention, she was subjected to brutal beatings, electric shock torture, and psychological abuse. Law enforcement officers humiliated her for her gender identity, asked offensive questions, beat her ribs and teeth, and forced her to participate in a "confession" video for propaganda purposes. She was subsequently placed under administrative arrest.

She was later evacuated from the country.

4. In July 2024, in a small Belarusian town, **a transgender man** who worked as a teacher was detained without explanation and subjected to degrading treatment by law enforcement officers due to his gender transition. The official report contained no evidence other than his gender identity. Under pressure from the prosecutor's office, he was later dismissed from the educational institution.

In November of the same year, he was declared wanted, which forced him to leave the country for his personal safety.

5. In September 2024, **a transgender woman** and her partner were detained on charges of possessing extremist materials. During the arrest, she was beaten and subjected to psychological abuse, with law enforcement officials humiliating her based on her gender identity. She was coerced into signing a report citing Article 343 of the Belarusian Criminal Code (production and distribution of pornographic materials or items of a pornographic nature).

Fearing further criminal prosecution, she was forced to leave the country.

6. In the same month, in a regional city in Belarus, **a transgender woman** was called to the dean's office during a lecture and detained on charges of distributing extremist materials. The persecution against her was initiated by law enforcement agencies following a complaint from the university administration. Faculty members had previously made transphobic remarks towards her and demanded she cease her gender transition. During the detention, security officers humiliated her based on her gender identity and threatened her with violence. As a result, she was fined 10 base units and expelled from the university.

Due to increasing pressure and threats of further persecution, she was forced to leave Belarus.

7. Another incident occurred in September 2024 in a small town, where **three transgender women** were subjected to searches and beatings. Security forces used physical violence against them, citing their gender identity and personal prejudice as justification. At least one of the victims was charged with distributing pornographic materials based on a photo of her in lingerie posted on the Russian social network VK. A criminal case was initiated against her under Article 343 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

Realizing that the persecution could only intensify, she left the country.

8. The eighth case also occurred in September 2024. During detention, law enforcement officers used physical force against **a transgender woman**, making degrading and offensive remarks related to her gender identity. At the police station, she was subjected to cruel treatment, including beatings, forced restraint with handcuffs, and being dragged across the floor, leading to significant physical and psychological suffering. Threats of rape were also voiced by law enforcement in the event of her non-compliance with their demands.

Recognizing the real threat to her life and safety in Belarus, the victim was forced to leave the country.

TG House also possesses information on **nine more cases of repression against queer individuals** that took place in Belarus from September to the end of November. Some of the individuals were detained by officers of the KGB, while others were targeted by the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK). Traditional methods used by Belarusian security forces were applied to them: some were subjected to physical violence, while others faced psychological pressure, threats, insults, and humiliation, as well as unlawful detention, blackmail, initiation of administrative and criminal cases against them, and administrative arrest.

1. In September, a 30-year-old **queer man** was unlawfully detained for subscribing to a page that had been classified as extremist material, without any evidence provided to substantiate his guilt. In a "confession video" security officers asked him questions about his sexual orientation, violating his rights. The video was published with his face visible to increase pressure on him.
2. In September, a **queer activist** from one of the LGBTQ+ organizations was subjected to administrative arrest twice by KGB officers. Law enforcement conducted a search of her apartment, confiscated her belongings, and threatened both her and her husband. Their primary interest was her activism.
3. In the same month, an **LGBTQ+ activist** from a queer initiative faced persecution. Unknown individuals in plain clothes attempted to enter her home twice. Subsequently, she received threats through social media.
4. In Grodno, a **queer man** was forcefully detained at his home by officers of the Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (GUBOPiK). He was beaten, humiliated, and tortured for six hours while being threatened and mocked. The authorities pressured him to monitor his partner and reveal information about those assisting activists with visas and financial support. Despite the pressure, he refused to cooperate. He was sentenced to 11 days of administrative arrest under Article 19.11 for alleged participation in an extremist formation. Later, a criminal case was opened against him under Article 364 of the Criminal Code. Realizing that his safety was at risk, he was forced to flee the country, crossing the border into Lithuania illegally.
5. In early October, another **queer activist** was detained and interrogated by KGB officers, who questioned her about her involvement in LGBTQ+ activism. She was unlawfully sentenced to administrative detention.
6. A **gay activist** and former political prisoner was forced to leave the country after one of his social media accounts was declared extremist in November. On his Instagram, he posted LGBTQ-related videos, advocated for gender diversity, and called for support of the community.
7. A **queer activist**, involved in several LGBTQ+ organizations, faced persecution in September following a raid on activists of the "Active Being Fun" ("Актыўнымі Быць Файна!" – ABF) group, during which their phones were confiscated, revealing information about queer events and photos featuring him. Soon after, he received anonymous threats on social media demanding that he cease his activities. As a result, he had to leave Belarus urgently.

8. In the same month, **a queer activist** was persecuted by KGB officers as part of a case related to ABF activists. She was detained for 15 days due to inconsistencies between her testimony and that of another activist. After her release, she was forced to flee Belarus.
9. Also in September, **a queer activist** was detained for participating in an educational program of the feminist organization "Leadership School" ("Школа Лідарства"). During her arrest, KGB and riot police officers (Special Purpose Police Detachment) searched her apartment, confiscating electronic devices and other personal belongings. She was charged with an administrative offense under Article 19.1 of the Administrative Code (minor hooliganism) and sentenced to 13 days of administrative detention. However, upon completing the sentence, she was not released but instead sentenced again to 15 more days on the same charge. Before her eventual release, she was taken to the Investigative Committee for further questioning. Now she is outside Belarus.

All individuals who faced repression and whose cases are cited above have been evacuated from Belarus. TG House conducted interviews with all affected individuals to verify the facts of the repression and the information they provided.

For security reasons, we do not publish details of repressions against individuals who still remain in the country.

4. Discrimination and pressure in places of detention

In 2024, the situation of LGBTQ+ individuals in penitentiary institutions of the Republic of Belarus remained extremely difficult. Members of the community faced systematic discrimination, violence, humiliation, and a lack of adequate medical care.

Throughout 2024, the legislation of the Republic of Belarus did not undergo any positive changes in terms of protecting the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, including those in places of detention. The applicable provisions of the Criminal Code and other regulatory acts do not take into account the specific needs of LGBTQ+ inmates, which contributes to their stigmatization and violation of their rights.

LGBTQ+ inmates are stigmatized both by fellow prisoners and by the administration of correctional facilities. Inmates who openly declare their gender identity or sexual orientation face violence and social ostracism.

The case of Vadim Yermashuk

One of the most high-profile cases in 2024 was that of Hrodna-based blogger Vadim Yermashuk, known as Vadimati, who openly declared his homosexual orientation.

Arrest and trial: In August 2021, Yermashuk was detained in the city of Shchuchyn, after which a criminal case was initiated against him under Articles 368 (Insulting the President) and 370 (Desecration of state symbols) of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. In December 2021, he was sentenced to three years in a general-regime penal colony.

Persecution and outing: While in custody, the authorities organized a campaign to coerce him into cooperation, threatening to disseminate intimate materials. After his refusal, these materials were published in pro-government Telegram channels, leading to public outing and severe psychological consequences.

Conditions of detention: In Correctional Colony No. 2 in Babruysk, Yermashuk was assigned "low social status", which resulted in social isolation, forced humiliating labor, and ostracism from other inmates.

Medical care: During his time in the colony, Yermashuk's health deteriorated, including a skin cancer diagnosis and the need for inguinal hernia surgeries. Medical assistance was provided only to a limited extent, which led to a worsening of his condition.

Emigration: In December 2024, Yermashuk was forced to leave the country and relocate to Poland, fearing further repression.

5. Social and cultural discrimination

For the second consecutive year, Belarus ranks 45th out of 49 European countries in terms of the legal status of sexual minorities, according to the annual [Rainbow map](#) published by ILGA-Europe on May 15th.

According to the organization's legal assessment, Belarus scored **11.16% out of 100%** in 2024 (compared to **12.06%** in 2023). The legal situation for LGBTQ+ individuals is assessed as worse only in Armenia (**9.16%**), Turkey (**4.75%**), Azerbaijan (**2.25%**), and Russia (**2%**). The publication of the Rainbow Map is traditionally timed to coincide with the **International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia (May 17th)**.

In October 2024, it became known that the Belarusian government is finalizing work on draft laws initiated by the Prosecutor General's Office to establish administrative liability for the "promotion of homosexuality, gender change, pedophilia, refusal to have children, and possession of pornographic materials featuring minors." This was announced by Prosecutor General Andrei Shved on the sidelines of the **34th meeting of the Coordinating Council of Prosecutors General of CIS member states**, which took place in Yerevan. According to Shved, the proposed legislation also includes the introduction of **psychological testing for educators** to identify potential tendencies towards committing sexual offenses against children.

Since LGBTQ+ relationships are classified as "non-traditional sexual relationships" and categorized as "pornographic content" under the **Resolution No. 18**, any actions related to the dissemination of information about LGBTQ+ issues may be considered as "pornography distribution." This could include activities such as filming movies (for example, a documentary about the life of a homosexual woman), organizing events, or making public statements, posing a significant threat to **freedom of speech and expression** on these topics. It is also likely that authorities will extend their control to content posted on **social media**, further restricting visibility and discussion of LGBTQ+ issues in Belarus.

In recent years there has been a decline in the availability of **hormone therapy**, which has significantly impacted transgender and non-binary individuals. While the **legal procedure** for gender transition in Belarus remains unchanged, the rejection rate by the interdepartmental commission has increased dramatically in 2024. Previously, the rejection rate [was around 10-15%](#) (2-3 rejections out of 20 applications), but today this figure has risen to **80%**. In **May 2024**, the commission denied approval to **15 out of 20 applicants**, marking a drastic shift in policy and further limiting access to essential medical services for transgender individuals.

In December, **28 individuals** attended the commission's meeting, with only **9 receiving a positive conclusion**. Of the **23 individuals** attending their first commission review, only **5 were granted approval for transition**. For those attending their second commission, the statistics were slightly better: out of **5 individuals**, **4 received a positive decision**.

TG House suggests that the commission is deliberately reducing the number of approvals granted for gender transition. This raises concerns that, in the future, the authorities might completely refuse to recognize the rights of transgender individuals in Belarus. Over the past **one and a half years**,

approximately **50 to 60 transgender people** have been left in an uncertain status, unable to access legal gender recognition and necessary medical care.

In 2024, **TG House** [conducted](#) a mini-study on the challenges faced by transgender individuals in educational environments, with **21 participants** who had studied at Belarusian universities and colleges at various times, from **2012 until the time of the survey**.

According to the collected data, **76% of respondents** experienced various forms of harassment during their studies, ranging from bullying to explicit threats. Among the respondents, **38%** reported having their coming-out during their studies, while more than half (**52%**) stated that they came out only partially. Only **two individuals (9.5%)** reported that they did not disclose their gender identity at all during their time in university or college.

Only **three respondents** reported that their educational institution's administration demonstrated understanding and even provided support. **Nine individuals (43%)** mentioned experiencing both support and discrimination, while **six respondents (28.6%)** stated that they encountered exclusively negative attitudes. Fortunately, the majority — **13 people (62%)** — indicated that the attitude they faced was neutral.

In contrast to the administration, **most fellow students** were more supportive or understanding towards transgender students. **11 respondents (52.4%)** reported experiencing support from their peers, and **15 people (71.4%)** said their classmates treated them neutrally. Only **two respondents (9.5%)** faced negative attitudes from their peers.

6. Information campaigns and censorship

Belarusian state propaganda continued its attacks on the LGBTQ+ community in 2024. According to an analysis conducted by **TG House**, the largest state-owned print media outlet in Belarus, "**SB. Belarus Today**" addresses LGBTQ+ topics **5 to 8 times per month**. State media frequently associate LGBTQ+ individuals with crime and deviance, reinforcing the false narrative that LGBTQ+ people are allegedly more prone to criminal or immoral behavior. A deliberate effort is being made to portray LGBTQ+ individuals as a **threat to children**, which exacerbates public fears and prejudices. This manufactured narrative serves to justify the **need for increased control** over LGBTQ+ organizations and provides a rationale for the **repressive measures** taken against activists and the community as a whole.

In 2024, **TG House** became the first LGBTQ+ organization in Belarus to be officially recognized as **extremist**. By a ruling of the **Central District Court of Minsk** on **March 28th, 2024**, its online resources and social media accounts, including its **Telegram channel, Facebook, and Instagram pages**, were added to the list of extremist materials. The organization, which provides support to transgender individuals, has been banned, creating a serious threat to anyone who collaborates with or utilizes its resources. Any interaction with TG House can now be considered as **participation in illegal activities**, further intensifying the pressure on the LGBTQ+ community in Belarus. The year 2024 in Belarus has been described as "**even more repressive than the previous two**", [according](#) to the **Viasna Human Rights Center** in its report on the political persecution of citizens under administrative charges.

It has been reported that human rights defenders documented **at least 8,895 cases** of such repressive actions over the past year.

Furthermore, credible information indicates that since **2020, at least 7,759 individuals** have been subjected to politically motivated **criminal prosecution**. Political **convictions** have been handed down against **at least 6,553 individuals**, highlighting the scale and persistence of state repression in Belarus.

Conclusion

Monitoring has revealed a systematic deterioration of the human rights situation for the LGBTQ+ community in Belarus. Repressive measures by the state, discriminatory policies, and aggressive propaganda have exacerbated stigmatization and marginalization, negatively impacting the physical, psychological, and social well-being of community members.

Throughout the year, significant changes in law enforcement practices have created threats to LGBTQ+ activists, human rights defenders, and ordinary citizens. Administrative and criminal prosecutions of LGBTQ+ individuals have led to an atmosphere of fear and forced migration from the country.

Particularly concerning are cases of unlawful detentions and the use of violence by law enforcement agencies. LGBTQ+ individuals face physical and psychological pressure, including blackmail, threats, and coercion into public humiliation through so-called "apology" videos.

The conditions of LGBTQ+ detainees remain extremely harsh. They experience systematic stigmatization, denial of medical assistance, and threats of physical violence from both prison staff and fellow inmates.

Beyond the law enforcement sphere, significant challenges persist in the social environment. Access to education, healthcare, and employment remains limited, particularly for transgender individuals, who are often denied access to essential medical services.

Informational isolation continues to intensify. State media portray the LGBTQ+ community in a negative light, framing it as a threat to traditional values, while independent resources and initiatives face censorship and repression.

In light of this situation, urgent action from the international community is required. The United Nations and human rights organizations must pay special attention to the escalating crisis and take concrete steps to protect LGBTQ+ individuals in Belarus.

TG House recommends:

- Expanding monitoring and documentation of LGBTQ+ human rights violations in Belarus;
- Implementing diplomatic measures and increasing pressure on Belarusian authorities;
- Providing support to victims by ensuring safe evacuation and reintegration routes;
- Developing a comprehensive strategy for the protection and support of the LGBTQ+ community both within the country and abroad.

The current situation demands immediate action and international solidarity to ensure the safety and rights of LGBTQ+ individuals in Belarus.