



**Universal Periodic Review – Human Rights Council**

**Fourth Cycle**

**Belarus**

## **Alternative Report by the Civil Society Organization TG House**

7 April 2025 (Warsaw, Poland)

TG House is a Belarusian LGBTQ+ organization registered in Poland. The organization provides comprehensive support to transgender and non-binary individuals in Belarus and in exile, monitors human rights violations against the LGBTQ+ community in Belarus, and carries out advocacy campaigns, protest actions, and international submissions and petitions aimed at protecting the rights of the community.

This report is based on data collected by TG House between 2020 and early 2025. Its objective is to present information on the situation of LGBTQ+ people in Belarus within the framework of the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. The report is based on TG House's internal documentation and verified individual cases.

**Contact details:**

**Alisa Sarmant, Director**

**E-mail: [tghouseby@gmail.com](mailto:tghouseby@gmail.com)**

## I. Context

1. The LGBTQ+ community remains one of the most vulnerable and systematically discriminated groups in Belarus. Despite its international obligations and the recommendations received during previous cycles of the Universal Periodic Review, the state has taken no effective measures to improve the situation of this group. On the contrary, **none of the recommendations concerning sexual orientation and gender identity have been implemented**<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, the situation has further deteriorated, with increased repression, hate speech, legislative pressure, and social stigmatization, making life for LGBTQ+ individuals in Belarus increasingly unsafe.

2. There is still no anti-discrimination legislation in Belarus that includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Same-sex unions are not recognized, and while a formal procedure for gender transition exists, obtaining official authorization in practice is extremely difficult. Any public reference to LGBTQ+ rights is treated by the authorities as a threat to “traditional values” and is accompanied by an escalation in hostile rhetoric. Members of the community are regularly subjected to pressure, discrimination, and repressive actions by the state<sup>2</sup>.

## II. General Situation

3. Between 2020 and 2025, TG House documented **46 detentions of LGBTQ+ individuals, including 16 transgender persons**. This statistic does not reflect the full scale of the problem, as documentation is hindered by state-imposed censorship, victims’ fear of violence and discrimination, and the limited resources of the organization.

4. Since 2023<sup>3</sup>, there has been a marked increase in hate speech and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric promoted by Belarusian authorities and state-controlled media. This state-sponsored discourse contributes to the normalization of discrimination and hostility against LGBTQ+ individuals and reinforces a climate of fear and marginalization<sup>4</sup>.

5. In February 2024, the government announced the development of a draft law criminalizing the “propaganda of non-traditional family relationships,” referring specifically to same-sex relations<sup>5</sup>. Such language lays the groundwork for further stigmatization and potential criminal prosecution of individuals whose private or public expression does not align with so-called “traditional values.” This poses serious risks to freedom of expression, threatens the

---

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Center “Viasna” Report to the UN on the state's implementation of the recommendations of the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. 2023.

<https://spring96.org/en/news/113468>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Report of the Group of Independent Experts on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus. 2025. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/68>

<sup>3</sup> TG House “Мониторинг риторики белорусской пропаганды в отношении ЛГБТК+ сообщества в 2023 году”, <https://tbelarus.com/post/gos-smi-nenavist-lgbtk>

<sup>4</sup> TG House “Мониторинг риторики белорусской пропаганды в отношении ЛГБТК+ сообщества в 2024 году”, <https://tbelarus.com/post/monitoring-propaganda-2024>

<sup>5</sup> TG House “Власти хотят штрафовать белорусов «за пропаганду смены пола», <https://tbelarus.com/post/shtrafy-za-smenu-pola>

right to privacy, and is likely to be used to persecute LGBTQ+ individuals who do not conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity.

6. In March 2024, the Belarusian government expanded<sup>6</sup> the legal definition of pornography to include the demonstration of “transsexualism,” “homosexuality,” and “polyamory.” In practice, this criminalizes any mention or depiction related to LGBTQ+ topics. Violations are punishable by up to four years of imprisonment<sup>7</sup>.

7. On February 7, 2025, amendments to the Law “On the Rights of the Child”<sup>8</sup> passed their first reading, introducing a new list of content deemed “harmful to the health and development of children” under Article 37-1. The list includes vague and discriminatory references targeting LGBTQ+ individuals, such as the “promotion of homosexual relations, gender change, pedophilia, and childlessness.” These provisions may serve as a legal basis for repressive measures against the LGBTQ+ community and human rights organizations, and contribute to the further stigmatization of LGBTQ+ identities<sup>9</sup>.

### **III. Rights of Transgender People in Belarus**

8. Since 2023, there has been a sharp increase in refusals by state authorities to grant legal gender recognition. While between 2019 and 2022 the rejection rate ranged from 10 to 20%, by 2023 it had risen to approximately 80%. The decision-making process remains opaque, and the decisions of the gender recognition commission (officially titled the “Interdepartmental Commission for the Medico-Psychological and Social Rehabilitation of Persons with Gender Identity Disorder”) cannot be appealed through either administrative or judicial mechanisms. This deprives transgender individuals of effective legal remedies and is inconsistent with international human rights standards, including the right to a fair hearing and protection from discrimination<sup>10</sup>.

9. In the passport of a citizen of the Republic of Belarus, the personal identification number includes a digit that reflects the gender assigned at birth. Even after a legal name and gender marker change, this digit remains unchanged, violating the confidentiality of transgender individuals and exposing them to the risk of discrimination. Since 2020, TG House has documented 12 cases in which transgender people were identified by this digit during employment procedures, when opening bank accounts, and when accessing services at state or private institutions.

---

<sup>6</sup> Постановление Министерства культуры от №24 от 19 марта 2024 года.

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441365>

<sup>7</sup> Уголовный кодекс Республики Беларусь. Статья 343 Распространение порнографической продукции

<sup>8</sup> Совет министров Республики Беларусь. 2025 г.

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3941&p0=2024069001>

<sup>9</sup> TG House “Под маской «защиты детей»: новая атака на права ЛГБТК+ в Беларуси”. 2025 г.

<https://tbelarus.com/post/novaja-ataka-na-prava-lgbtk-v-belarusi>

<sup>10</sup> TG House “Мониторинг работы комиссии по транс-переходу в Беларуси (2019–2024)” 2024 г.

<https://tbelarus.com/post/monitoring-komissii-po-trans-perehodu-v-belarusi-2019-2024>

10. Since 2020, TG House has documented 5 cases in which transgender men were assigned Article 19a (“severe mental illness”) in their military ID. This creates significant barriers to employment, obtaining a driver’s license, and accessing other services that require the presentation of this document.

11. TG House documented 7 cases in which transgender women were declared fit for compulsory military service by conscription commissions, despite their verbal statements regarding their gender identity differing from the gender indicated in official documents. Contrary to established procedure, these individuals were not referred for psychiatric evaluation and were forced to initiate the process themselves, including psychiatric registration and hospitalization, in order to obtain a diagnosis of “transsexualism” (F64.0), which is required to obtain a deferment from military service. Full exemption from military duty becomes possible only after completing the legal gender recognition process and officially changing the gender marker in the passport.

12. In December 2023, TG House documented a case in which a transgender man was forcibly summoned to a second hearing of the gender transition commission, which reversed its previous decision recognizing his gender marker and ordered the reinstatement of the female gender in his official documents. Simultaneously, the authorities-initiated proceedings to revoke his parental rights, despite the absence of any legal grounds for such action<sup>11</sup>.

13. Since 2023, TG House has recorded cases in which transgender individuals were deliberately assigned alternative psychiatric diagnoses (such as personality disorders) during medico-psychological evaluations. These diagnoses were used as grounds to officially deny access to legal gender recognition and the gender transition process.

14. As of 2025, legal gender recognition in the Republic of Belarus is still only possible with a formal diagnosis of “transsexualism” (F64.0 under ICD-10). This reflects an outdated and stigmatizing medical model that pathologizes transgender identities and contradicts current international standards, including the updated ICD-11, in which gender incongruence is no longer classified as a mental disorder.

15. Transgender individuals continue to face significant barriers in accessing medical care. In 2023, TG House documented cases of denial of healthcare services, as well as instances of transphobic and degrading treatment by medical personnel<sup>12</sup>. Such practices further exacerbate the vulnerability of transgender people and constitute a violation of their right to health, non-discrimination, and human dignity.

---

<sup>11</sup> TG House “Чиновники вынудили транс-мужчину отказаться от перехода и вернуть прежние документы, угрожая забрать его детей” 2024 г. <https://tbelarus.com/post/chinovniki-vynudili-trans-muzhchinu-otkazatsya-ot-perehoda>

<sup>12</sup> «Бюллетень Национального научно-исследовательского института общественного здоровья имени Н.А. Семашко» (2024, № 4, стр. 71–79, doi:10.69541/NRIPH.2024.04.011), [http://bulleten-nriph.ru/journal/issue/viewIssue/168/pdf\\_21](http://bulleten-nriph.ru/journal/issue/viewIssue/168/pdf_21)

#### **IV. Discrimination, Violence, and Human Rights Violations Against the LGBTQ+ Community**

16. In Belarus, the practice of arbitrary detentions, violence, pressure, and threats against LGBTQ+ individuals by law enforcement authorities continues. Such detentions often occur without formal charges or documentation and without access to legal assistance. In many cases, detainees are subjected to physical and psychological abuse, including beatings, insults, and forced participation in so-called “confession videos” that are subsequently published on state-aligned propaganda platforms.

17. In August 2021, LGBTQ+ activist and blogger Vadzim Yermashuk was sentenced to three years of imprisonment on politically motivated charges. While serving his sentence in Penal Colony No. 2, he was subjected to torture and ill-treatment by prison staff, including beatings, verbal abuse, and the forced outing of his sexual orientation. As a result, he was assigned a “low social status” within the prison hierarchy, which led to social isolation and increased risk of violence, humiliation, and further abuse by both staff and other inmates<sup>13</sup>.

18. In 2023 and 2024, TG House documented two cases of administrative arrest involving a transgender woman, referred to as T<sup>14</sup>. During both arrests, she was subjected to ill-treatment, including beatings, threats, humiliation, and the use of an electric shock device. In the second case, in 2024, she was forced to record a so-called “confession video” in which she appeared with visible signs of physical abuse and in a state of exhaustion. In the video, she was compelled to publicly disclose her gender identity (forced outing) and confess to actions she did not commit. The video was later published on pro-government Telegram channels.

19. In 2024, following the adoption of a government resolution recognizing information related to LGBTQ+ topics as pornography, TG House documented cases of criminal prosecution against transgender individuals. In three documented cases, transgender persons were charged under Article 343 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (“distribution of pornographic materials”)<sup>15</sup>. Personal photos posted on social media, which contained no pornographic content, were classified as pornography. These cases demonstrate the arbitrary and discriminatory application of criminal law against transgender individuals.

20. Transgender students and employees face discrimination in the fields of education<sup>16</sup> and employment. Documented cases include expulsions from educational institutions, dismissals, and refusals of employment based on gender identity.

---

<sup>13</sup> BYSOL “Blogger Vadim Ermashuk asks for help to recover from prison and illnesses” 2025. <https://bysol.org/en/private/vadimati/>

<sup>14</sup> TG House “Трансгендерная беларуска Т. после эвакуации из страны рассказала ужасающие подробности своего задержания: избияения, издевательства и пытки электрошокером” <https://tbelarus.com/post/t-belaruska-podrobnosti-pytok>

<sup>15</sup> TG House “Мониторинг репрессий и дискриминации в отношении ЛГБТК+ сообщества Беларуси в 2024 году” 2025 г. <https://tbelarus.com/post/the-monitoring-of-repression-2024>

<sup>16</sup> TG House “Невидимые шрамы: трансгендерные студенты о буллинге и дискриминации” 2024 г. <https://tbelarus.com/post/stud-opros-diskr-bulling>

21. Systematic persecution, arbitrary detentions, threats of criminal prosecution, and discrimination by state authorities have created conditions in which LGBTQ+ individuals are forced to flee the Republic of Belarus. Between 2020 and 2025, TG House documented 40 cases in which members of the LGBTQ+ community were compelled to emigrate due to repression, risk of persecution, or reasonable concerns for their safety.

22. Relatives of LGBTQ+ individuals and activists have also been subjected to persecution by the KGB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and other security agencies. Between 2024 and 2025, TG House documented 6 such cases, which involved interrogations, home searches, confiscation of personal devices, threats, and other forms of pressure.

## **V. Restrictions on Freedom of Expression and Activities of LGBTQ+ Initiatives**

23. Since 2020, LGBTQ+ topics in Belarus have been subjected to systematic censorship. Human rights and cultural initiatives have been shut down or labeled as extremist, and any attempts to carry out educational or human rights activities in this field are met with the threat of criminal or administrative prosecution. Public engagement related to the protection of LGBTQ+ rights has been effectively criminalized and excluded from the legal civic space.

24. Since 2022, there has been an increase in the censorship and banning of literary works containing LGBTQ+ characters or themes. The Ministry of Information has added such books to the list of materials deemed harmful to national interests. Titles on this list include *"Summer in a Pioneer Tie"* by Elena Malisova and Katerina Silvanova, *"A Home at the End of the World"* by Michael Cunningham, *"A Single Man"* by Christopher Isherwood, *"The Song of Achilles"* by Madeline Miller, and *"A Little Life"* by Hanya Yanagihara. These books have also disappeared from bookstores and libraries without any official explanation. Such actions severely restrict freedom of expression, hinder access to accurate information, and contribute to the further marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals<sup>17</sup>.

25. In 2024, by a decision of the Central District Court of Minsk dated 28 March 2024, TG House became the first LGBTQ+ organization in Belarus whose online resources and social media platforms (including its website, Telegram channel, Facebook and Instagram pages) were included in the national list of extremist materials<sup>18</sup>.

26. Attempts to register human rights initiatives supporting LGBTQ+ individuals are routinely rejected by the authorities. All previously existing organizations have been liquidated. As a result, LGBTQ+ people have been deprived of access to legal, social, and psychological support within the framework of the law.

---

<sup>17</sup> TG House "Мониторинг репрессий и дискриминации в отношении ЛГБТК+ сообщества Беларуси в 2024 году" 2025 г. <https://tbelarus.com/post/the-monitoring-of-repression-2024>

<sup>18</sup> Министерство информации "Республиканский список экстремистских материалов" 2025 г. <http://mininform.gov.by/documents/respublikanskiy-spisok-ekstremistskikh-materialov/>

## **VI. Recommendations**

**27. Cease the arbitrary detention of LGBTQ+ individuals for engaging in human rights activities, both domestically and abroad, and ensure the immediate release of those who have been convicted for such activities.**

**28. Repeal existing and refrain from adopting new laws and regulations that promote discrimination or stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community, including Resolution No. 24 of the Ministry of Culture (adopted on 19 March 2024) and relevant provisions of the Law “On the Rights of the Child.”**

**29. Ensure a transparent, non-discriminatory, and internationally compliant procedure for legal gender recognition, including the removal of mandatory psychiatric diagnoses and the introduction of an appeal mechanism.**

30. Guarantee the confidentiality of medical information related to gender identity and prohibit its disclosure without the patient’s consent.

31. End the practice of annulling previously approved gender transition decisions without the involvement of the applicant and without legal justification.

32. Ensure equal and non-discriminatory access to healthcare services for transgender and non-binary individuals.

33. Provide internal training and guidance for medical personnel on respectful and appropriate interaction with transgender patients.

34. Guarantee access to information on sexual orientation and gender identity in educational and cultural institutions.

35. End the arbitrary designation of LGBTQ+ resources as extremist materials.

36. Allow for the registration of initiatives and organizations that provide psychological, medical, and legal support to LGBTQ+ people.

37. Refrain from using rhetoric in official statements and state media that promotes stigma, discrimination, or hostility towards the LGBTQ+ community.

38. End the harassment and persecution of family members and close associates of LGBTQ+ individuals by state authorities.