Joint statement

Georgian government should protect the fundamental human rights of the LGBTQI community

On 24 April 2020, the Georgian government published its’ Anti-crisis Economic Plan in response to the COVID19 pandemic.1 Despite the fact that local LGBTQI organisations had repeatedly appealed to the government to take the special needs of the LGBTQI community into consideration, the current version of the plan fails to address these.2

The crisis has exacerbated existing inequalities and had a disproportionate effect on marginalised communities. It has severely affected LGBTQI people who are self-employed or who are involved in precarious labour, those who have low or no income, as well as sex workers, persons living with disabilities, migrants, the young and the elderly. Trans people living in Georgia face obstacles to employment because they are unable to change their gender marker. Every day, we hear numerous reports of queer people being kicked out of their homes by their parents and relatives due to homo/bi/transphobia. Amid the exponential rise in job losses in precarious employment sectors, LGBTQI people often face eviction because they are not able to pay the rent and in some cases they are driven to starvation. These conditions have led to an increased number of suicide attempts and self-harm cases amongst LGBTQI people. Over the past three days, two suicide attempts have been reported. One of them occurred in front of Tbilisi City Hall, where a 19 year old trans-woman and sex-worker self-

2 Coalition for Equality – The Needs of Groups Beyond the Scope of the State Anti-crisis Plan - https://women.ge/en/news/newsfeed/284/?fbclid=IwAR1m-jRy5YdhnHcLf8BuMVxXnXnY1V0ZpGfMTosD2ZMs46sD682An6nDsk8Qk
Equality Movement addresses the Government https://www.equality.ge/5797
immolated in protest at the government’s negligence towards the transgender community during the pandemic.\(^3\)

In its crisis response measures, the Inter-agency Coordination Council has offered largely fragmented feedback to LGBTQI organisations’ appeals and has failed to proactively address the complex challenges on the agenda. LGBTQI organisations have received state support in the form of a few dozen boxes of food and personal hygiene kits, which have been promptly distributed as needed among the community. However, this one-off humanitarian assistance cannot qualify as an adequate state response to the current critical situation of many in the LGBTQI community.

With this statement, the undersigned Georgian LGBTQI organisations, together with partner organisations, call on the European institutions and decision-makers to use all available avenues to urge the Georgian government to adhere to its international obligations and protect the fundamental human rights of the LGBTQI community, in particular:

- To take into account the needs of LGBTQI people during the crisis, and the fact that they are doubly victimised by social and economic oppression brought on by the risk of losing their homes, as well as systemic homo/bi/transphobic violence and bullying and provide them with rental subsidies, shelter or alternative housing options;
- Implement additional measures aimed at providing assistance to vulnerable groups (including LGBTQI persons), whose needs have not been reflected in the government’s anti-crisis plan;
- Launch a transparent process of development of inclusive social policies that will identify systemic solutions to the challenges faced by LGBTQI people and will ensure empowerment and equality, both in the post-crisis period, as well in the long run.

**SIGNATORIES**

1. Equality Movement
2. Women’s Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG)
3. Identoba Youth
4. Queer Association - TEMIDA
5. Union Sapari
6. Women’s Fund in Georgia
7. Georgian Young Greens
8. International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
9. IGLYO - International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Association
10. ILGA-Europe – the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
11. ECOM - Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity
12. TGEU – Transgender Europe
13. SWAN - The Sex Workers’ Rights Advocacy Network

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\(^3\) [https://oc-media.org/transgender-woman-sets-herself-on-fire-in-tbilisi/](https://oc-media.org/transgender-woman-sets-herself-on-fire-in-tbilisi/)