

Anti-gender movements

in Belarus,
Georgia, and Kazakhstan:

a comparative
analysis

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Glossary

Antigender ideology is a belief system that asserts that gender roles are “natural” and immutable and that any ideas about gender equality, women’s rights, and LGBT+ people are a threat to the “traditional order”. This ideology rejects gender as a social category, insists on biological determinism, and defends patriarchal norms as the only acceptable ones.

Anti-gender movement is a network of political, religious, media, and social actors that disseminate and institutionalize anti-gender ideology.

Anti-gender narratives are a set of recurring ideas and myths aimed at discrediting gender equality, feminism, LGBT+ rights, and the concept of gender as a social category.

Introduction

In recent years, anti-gender movements have become a prominent political and social phenomenon worldwide. In this study, anti-gender ideology is defined as a system of beliefs that asserts that gender roles are “natural” and immutable and that any ideas about gender equality, women’s rights, and LGBT+ people pose a threat to the “traditional order”. This ideology rejects gender as a social category, insists on biological determinism, and legitimizes patriarchal norms as the only acceptable basis for social order. In the political and media arena, these attitudes are manifested through anti-gender narratives – persistent sets of recurring ideas and myths aimed at discrediting feminism, LGBT+ rights, and the very concept of gender as a social category.

Anti-gender narratives do not exist in isolation, but circulate and are institutionalized through anti-gender movements, which in this study are defined as networks of political, religious, media, and social actors involved in the dissemination and normalization of anti-gender ideology. These movements influence legislation, public discourse, and the working conditions of civil society, contributing to the narrowing of space for women’s rights, LGBT+ people, gender education, and human rights advocacy.

Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan represent illustrative cases for analyzing anti-gender processes in the region. Despite numerous differences between these countries, including in political regimes, the role of religion, and the state of civil society, they are united by a post-Soviet context and close historical, cultural, and political ties with Russia (see, e.g., Sapsford & Abbott 2006).

The period from 2022 to 2025 was chosen for analysis for a reason. Firstly, this period saw a significant increase in anti-gender rhetoric in these countries, accompanied by repressive legislative initiatives (for example, the adoption or active discussion of laws banning “LGBT propaganda” and “foreign agents” in each of these countries), moral panics

in the media, and increased pressure on feminist and queer movements. Secondly, the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 inevitably impacted the entire region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, intensifying political radicalization and discourses of securitization, sovereignty preservation, and "traditional values". Finally, the research was conceived as the first attempt at a comparative analysis of anti-gender processes in the three countries under limited timeframes, which also dictated the focus on the most intense and revealing period of recent years.

The aim of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of anti-gender movements in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan, identify key narratives and actors, and analyze forms of feminist and queer resistance in response to the rise of anti-gender ideology. Particular attention is paid to testing the hypothesis that Russia acts as a source and exporter of anti-gender ideology in the region, influencing the development of anti-gender movements through political, economic, media, and religious transfer.

This study represents the first attempt to map anti-gender movement actors and analyze anti-gender discourse in three post-Soviet countries (Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan). It is important to note that this study does not claim to provide a comprehensive picture of events in these three countries. Rather than aiming for complete coverage, we focused on identifying key trends and testing hypotheses about the influence of the Russian agenda on anti-gender narratives in these countries.

The relevance of this study stems from both the rise of anti-gender movements in the region and globally, as well as the lack of comparative empirical work focusing on the perspectives of activists and human rights defenders themselves. The findings aim to deepen understanding of anti-gender processes, as well as to synthesize resistance strategies and formulate practical recommendations for feminist and queer organizations operating in the face of increasing conservative pressure.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative comparative methodology and combines several complementary analytical methods: comparative analysis, discourse analysis, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and a theoretical framework of feminist, queer, and decolonial approaches. This multi-layered approach allows us to analyze anti-gender processes as a set of ideological narratives, actors, and practices, and to identify forms of feminist and queer resistance in various national contexts.

Stage 1. Pre-research and contextual analysis

The first phase of the study focused on pre-research and reconstruction of the political, legislative, and social context in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan for the period 2022-2025. This phase analyzed open sources, including academic research, analytical and human rights reports from international and local organizations, the texts of laws and regulations, journalistic publications and investigations, and independent media reports.

The objectives of the research were:

- initial identification of key actors in anti-gender movements in each country;
- identification of dominant anti-gender narratives;
- recording changes in legislation and public rhetoric affecting the rights of women and LGBT+ people;
- formation of an analytical base for preparing an interview guide.

Pre-research allowed us to create a preliminary map of the actors of anti-gender movements and became the basis for the further empirical stage.

Stage 2. Interview

In the second stage, we sought informants for in-depth interviews. The search was conducted using a snowball sampling method through partner networks of feminist, queer, and human rights organizations and personal professional contacts. Informants were selected from among activists and human rights defenders with practical experience working with gender and/or LGBT+ issues (or at the intersection of these themes) and direct experience with anti-gender rhetoric in their countries.

A total of 9 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted:

- 2 interviews — with human rights activists from Georgia,
- 3 interviews — from Belarus,
- 4 interviews — from Kazakhstan.

The interviews were conducted from November 25 to December 29, 2025. The language of the interviews was determined by the informants themselves: 5 interviews were conducted in Russian (Belarus and Kazakhstan), 4 interviews in English (Georgia and Kazakhstan).

The following topics were discussed during the interview:

- the situation of the human rights sector in the country;
- repressive anti-LGBT+ and anti-feminist policies in the country;
- perception of anti-gender movements and their key actors;
- the main anti-gender narratives and forms of their dissemination;
- the alleged influence of Russia as a source of the ideology of “traditional values”;
- strategies, practices and forms of feminist and queer resistance.

Interviews were also used to clarify and critically check the data obtained during the pre-research stage.

The process of finding informants was fraught with difficulties. In Belarus and Georgia, this was due to the generally repressive political environment and security concerns. In Kazakhstan, legislative changes (the introduction of the “LGBT propaganda” law) and the activists’ overloaded workload at the time of the search were additional factors, limiting their willingness to participate in the study. A separate challenge was the sensitivity of the topic, given that the study was

conducted by a Russian researcher for a Russian LGBT+ organization, which required additional trust and transparency.

Due to the limitations described above, our sample is biased toward queer activists, as well as human rights defenders working on LGBT+ issues. Despite our initial plans to include equal numbers of feminist activists and queer women from each country, in some cases, participants were primarily experts in LGBT+ rights. This impacted our data: topics of anti-LGBT+ rhetoric, security strategies, and institutional pressure on the queer community are sometimes covered in greater detail, while antifeminist policies and feminist experiences are less thoroughly explored. This should be taken into account when using the research results.

Stage 3. Discourse analysis of anti-gender narratives

In the next stage, using a combination of pre-research and interview data, sources for discourse analysis were selected. For each country, key actors in anti-gender movements (state, religious, media, and public) were identified, after which two to three texts (publications, public statements, interviews, and speeches) were analyzed for each. The study utilizes qualitative critical discourse analysis (CDA), drawing on the approaches of Norman Fairclough, Ten A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak (Fairclough 2003, Van Dijk 2017, Wodak 2009). This theoretical and methodological synthesis allows us to consider discourse not as a neutral reflection of social reality, but as a form of production of power, norms, and hierarchies, particularly in relation to gender, sexuality, and nationality.

In the case of Georgia, the analysis faced language limitations: the researcher does not speak Georgian, and the vast majority of texts were published in Georgian. The analysis utilized materials translated into Russian and English by journalists, as well as texts, machine-translated from Georgian. In Belarus and Kazakhstan, anti-gender activists actively used Russian, and in Kazakhstan, a significant portion of the materials were additionally duplicated in Russian. The language factor was taken into account when interpreting the data and was considered a key methodological limitation, particularly in the Georgian case.

Step 4. Data Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which allowed for the identification of recurring patterns, discrepancies, and contextual features across the three countries.

All sources were compared using a triangulation strategy to cross-check interpretations and ensure consistency of findings.

The key analytical framework for the study is a post- and decolonial approach. The question of Russia's influence as an ideological and cultural exporter of anti-gender ideology was examined critically, taking into account the agency of local actors, local political interests, and the specifics of national contexts. This approach avoids a reductionist explanation of anti-gender processes solely through external influence and instead considers them as the result of the interaction of transnational and local dynamics. Moreover, in the interview guide, questions regarding Russia's possible influence were formulated openly and non-normatively: we did not assume influence as a given, but rather invited informants to independently assess its presence, degree, and forms of manifestation. This minimized the effect of induction and preserved space for alternative interpretations, including scenarios in which predominantly domestic political and social processes play a key role.

Legislative, political and social context: major changes in recent years

All three countries – Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan – share a common Soviet past, which is important for understanding contemporary political and ideological processes, including those related to gender. All three countries were formed as union republics within the USSR, which entailed inclusion in a unified legal, educational, cultural, and informational space, as well as subordination to the decision-making center in Moscow. The Soviet modernization model combined the formal rhetoric of gender equality (including the mass participation of women in paid labor and declared emancipation) with paternalistic state control over the body, reproduction, and public morality (see, for example, Tlostanova 2010).

At the same time, the post-Soviet transition was accompanied not only by political transformation but also by a rethinking of identity, often characterized by a “national conservative turn” and a partial revision of the Soviet legacy. Post- and decolonial approaches view the post-Soviet space as a region with complex dynamics, where cultural, linguistic, economic, and media dependencies on the former imperial center persist, while simultaneously actively constructing new national projects (Gorshenina 2021, Sagatienė 2023, Tlostanova 2017). This shared historical foundation does not imply homogeneity of political regimes or ideologies, but it does establish similar structural conditions in which transnational anti-gender narratives can resonate with and adapt to local discourses.

1. Belarus

Following the August 2020 presidential elections, the ensuing large-scale protests, and their brutal suppression, mass repression began in Belarus, and the space for civil society was significantly reduced. Criminal cases continue to be brought against activists and protest participants, who are accused of organizing unrest and engaging in “extremist activity”¹.

In the spring of 2021, a law on countering extremism was adopted, significantly expanding this concept and allowing for the arbitrary application of legal norms to restrict any form of self-organization². Since the beginning of mass repression in Belarus, at least 22,500 criminal cases related to accusations of “extremist activity” have been opened³. Various associations, human rights organizations, independent media, and online communities (such as Telegram chats) are recognized as extremist, as are various materials: websites, images, musical compositions, videos, etc. Participation in or support of an extremist organization is punishable by criminal penalties, while the distribution of extremist materials (including reposts and forwarding in private messages) is subject to administrative liability.

Although there are no legal provisions in Belarus equating LGBT+ activism or support for LGBT+ rights with extremist activity, there are precedents where the materials of LGBT+ initiatives have been deemed extremist⁴. For example, in March 2024, the Central District Court of Minsk deemed information materials from TG House, a Belarusian trans organization, to be extremist. Furthermore, the list of extremist materials includes materials and accounts of feminist, LGBT+, and queer organizations, initiatives, and media outlets⁵. In October 2025, the feminist initiative “Femgroup Belarus” was recognized as an extremist group⁶.

Independent human rights initiatives and media outlets,

- 1 Radio Liberty. (2025, August 10). *A Million “Enemies” and Outcasts. Belarus and Belarusians after the 2020 Protests.* <https://www.svoboda.org/a/belarusj-i-belorusy-posle-protestov-2020-go-/33499339.html>
- 2 Human Constanta. (2021, June 10). *Review of the fight against «extremism» in Belarus for April-May 2021.* <https://humanconstantia.org/obzor-borby-s-ekstremizmom-v-belarusi-za-aprel-maj-2021/>
- 3 Human Constanta. (2025, August 15). *Belarus: Counter-Extremism Laws Threaten Digital Rights.* <https://humanconstantia.org/belarus-zakony-o-protivodejstvii-ekstremizmu-stavyat-pod-ugrozu-cifrovye-prava/>
- 4 Outright International. (n.d.). *Country overview: Belarus.* <https://outrightinternational.org/our-work/europe-and-central-asia/belarus>
- 5 Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus. (n.d.). *Republican List of Extremist Materials.* <http://mininform.gov.by/documents/respublikanskiy-spisok-ekstremistskikh-materialov/>
- 6 Reform.news. (2025, October 10). *“Femgroup Belarus” recognized as an “extremist organization”.* <https://reform.news/femgrupp-belarus-priznali-jekstremistskim-formirovaniem>

public foundations, and associations are being forcibly liquidated⁷. Furthermore, the situation in the human rights sector is complicated by increased state control over financial flows and accusations of “financing extremism”. Most surviving organizations are forced to operate online and in exile (this is especially true for LGBT+ organizations), and there is often no reliable information about those that continue to operate within the country. Discussions periodically swirl in Belarus about adopting a law on foreign agents similar to the Russian one, but as of January 2025, it has not yet been adopted⁸.

The crackdown on the human rights sector has affected organizations working on women’s and LGBT+ rights, as well as those supporting victims of domestic and sexualized violence⁹. Currently, virtually all functioning women’s public associations and organizations within Belarus are affiliated with the state and promote pro-government and conservative narratives. The Belarusian Union of Women is one of the largest and most influential among them¹⁰.

At the same time, domestic violence remains a pressing issue in the country: holding aggressors accountable is difficult, and official statistics are nonexistent¹¹. There is no specific law on domestic violence in Belarus, and authorities regularly oppose its introduction¹². Belarus has also not signed the Istanbul Convention, the key international instrument combating violence against women. Furthermore, Belarus lacks any specific anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has impacted Belarus’s foreign and domestic policies. Belarus has provided Russia with its territory for troop deployment and has become increasingly dependent on it. At the same time, domestic repression has intensified against those who disagree

- 7 Беларускі дом правў чалавека імя Барыса Звозскава (2023, 15 мая). *Chronology of violations of freedom of association and persecution of civil society organizations in Belarus*. <https://belhumanrights.house/news/lawtrend-hronologiya-narushenij-svobody-associacij-i-presledovaniya-organizacij-grazhdanskogo-obshchestva-v-belarusi>
- 8 Reform.news. (2024, September 18). *Belarus may adopt legislation on “foreign agents” after the elections – Karpenko*. <https://reform.news/belarus-vozmozhno-primet-zakonodatelstvo-ob-inoagentah-posle-vyborov-karpenko>
- 9 RESIST Project Team. (2024). *The RESIST project report: Effects of, and resistances to “anti-gender”*. https://theresistproject.eu/sdc_download/711/?key=mo8z7dabowpcfgmse2v69o6x8zw1bf
- 10 Zerkalo.io. (2023, July 18). *The head of the pro-government women’s union explained how Belarusian women should live: cover your backs, have children*. <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/44032.html?c>
- 11 Current Time. (2024, April 18). *“So what if my husband beats me? Who doesn’t?” How Belarus helps survivors of domestic violence after NGOs and shelters close*. <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/kak-v-belarusi-pomogayut-perezhivshim-domashnee-nasilie/32909637.html>
- 12 BELTA. (2018, October 5). *Lukashenko harshly criticized the bill on combating domestic violence*. <https://belta.by/president/view/lukashenko-zhestko-raskritikoval-zakonoproekt-o-protivodejstvii-domashnemu-nasiliju-320484-2018/>

with Lukashenko's political regime, as well as with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Belarus's role in it¹³. This dependence on Russia is also evident in how Belarusian politicians reproduce Russian narratives. For example, Natalia Kochanova, Chairperson of the Council of the Republic, has explicitly stated that one of the key areas of cooperation with Russia is the protection of "traditional values"¹⁴. In this context, the Belarusian Orthodox Church, a diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, also plays a significant role. The BOC is closely linked to the Belarusian state apparatus and supports the official rhetoric of "traditional family values"¹⁵.

The situation with LGBT+ rights in Belarus rapidly deteriorated in 2024–2025, despite the absence (as of September 2025) of a formally adopted law banning "propaganda of non-traditional relationships". In February 2024, a bill was drafted to introduce a new Article 19.16¹⁶, *Propaganda of Homosexual Relationships, Gender Reassignment, Childlessness, and Pedophilia*, to the Code of Administrative Offenses. It was adopted in its first reading on October 3, 2025¹⁷. According to the text of the bill, «propaganda» refers to the creation of an attractive image of LGBT+ people, gender reassignment, or childlessness—similar wording was used in the first Russian law on "LGBT propaganda"¹⁸. Formally, this leaves scope for the use of neutral language and factual statements. However, under a repressive regime and the de facto impunity of state bodies, such norms can be applied arbitrarily, including prosecution for neutral or educational statements. The promotion of this bill indicates a harsher state rhetoric regarding LGBT+ people and their rights, as well as reproductive freedoms.

On March 19, 2024, the Belarusian Ministry of Culture adopted Resolution No. 24, expanding the definition of pornography to include "non-traditional sexual relations", including "homosexuality", "lesbian love", "transsexualism", as well as bisexual relations and polyamory¹⁹. Thus, any visual or textual representation of LGBT+ people may

13 Human Rights Watch. (2023, January 12). *Belarus: Zone of Repression*. <https://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2023/01/12/belarus-zone-repression>

14 TG House. (2025, January 28). *Monitoring Repression and Discrimination against the LGBTQ+ Community in Belarus in 2024*. <https://tbelarus.com/post/the-monitoring-of-repression-2024>

15 St. Elizabeth Convent. (n.d.). *Open appeal against LGBT propaganda*. <https://obitel-minsk.ru/banners/protiv-propagandy-lgbt-otkrytoe-obraschenie>

16 RBC. (2024, February 19). *Belarus proposes punishing those promoting refusal to have children*. <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/19/02/2024/65d39c4d9a7947da1a92aca2>

17 National Legal Internet Portal of the Republic of Belarus. (2025, October 3). *Draft Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Amendments to the Codes of Administrative Liability"*. <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3951&p0=2025035001>

18 National Legal Internet Portal of the Republic of Belarus. (n.d.). *On Amendments to the Codes of Administrative Liability*. <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3941&p0=2025035001>

19 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus. (2024). *Resolution of March 19, 2024, No. 24*. <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441365>

be interpreted as pornographic and, as a result, banned.

In the summer and fall of 2024, a wave of arrests of LGBT+ people occurred: more than 15 people, including eight transgender individuals, were detained and subjected to torture and physical violence²⁰. In some cases, the basis for the arrests was subscriptions to websites deemed “extremist”, and some of the victims were forced into emergency exile.

In the fall of 2024, a list of printed publications banned from distribution in Belarus appeared on the Ministry of Information’s website²¹. These publications include books on feminist, sex-positive, LGBT+, and queer themes (both fiction and non-fiction)²².

Censorship in Belarus significantly limits the dissemination of reliable and scientifically based information on sexual and reproductive health, which is a serious problem in the absence of systematic sex education in schools and universities – and especially in light of the government’s attempts to introduce courses promoting “traditional family values” into the school curriculum.

Moreover, one can also speak of anti-gender censorship in the academic sphere: gender studies are not integrated into the higher education system, and there are no platforms for conducting such research within the country²³.

On February 7, 2025, a package of amendments to the *Law on Children’s Rights* was approved²⁴. Article 37-1 was supplemented with a provision stating that “propaganda of homosexual relations, gender reassignment, pedophilia, and childlessness” is harmful to the health and development of children. These amendments will come into force in January 2026. As with similar anti-gender initiatives in Russia, official rhetoric surrounding these legislative changes is built around the theme of “child protection”, which is used to justify discriminatory measures and restrictions on freedom of expression.

20 TG House. (2024, September 26). *TG House Statement on Repressions Against the LGBTQ+ Community in Belarus*. <https://tbelarus.com/post/zajavlenie-tg-house-o-repressiach>

21 Zerkalo.io. (2024, November 22). *Marquis de Sade, manga, and “Bitches.”*

The Ministry of Information published a list of “harmful” books banned from sale in Belarus. <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/84046.html>

22 Lobby. (2024, November 22). *The Belarusian authorities are also waging a war on literature, including queer literature*. <https://t.me/lesbianlobby/3161>

23 European Humanities University. (2016, October 17). *Elena Gapova: “EHU Master’s degree graduates write professionally about gender in Belarus.”* <https://ru.ehuniversity.lt/novosti/elena-gapova-professionalno-o-gendere-v-belarusi-pishut-vypuskniki-magistratury-egu/>

24 TG House. (2025, February 27). *Under the guise of “child protection”: a new attack on LGBTQ+ rights in Belarus*. <https://tbelarus.com/post/novaja-ataka-na-prava-lgbtk-v-belarusi>

Belarus still has a list of banned professions for women, although it was shortened in 2022²⁵, and there is now talk of abolishing it entirely²⁶.

Access to abortion is effectively available in Belarus: termination of pregnancy is possible at the woman's request up to 12 weeks, and up to 28 weeks if there are medical and social indications. However, legislation also requires consultation with a doctor and, in the case of minors, the written consent of a legal representative, which essentially constitutes restrictions. Furthermore, in recent years, the country has held "Abortion-Free Week" campaigns: for a week, medical facilities generally do not perform abortions, except in cases where they are medically necessary or where the mother's life is at risk²⁷. Such measures can be interpreted as reproductive pressure on Belarusian women and a restriction of their freedoms. As early as January 2026, an initiative was launched to ban abortions in private medical centers, because, according to Health Minister Alexander Khodjaev, the quality of pre-abortion counseling there was allegedly lower: after a consultation at private clinics, up to 80% of patients retain their decision to terminate a pregnancy, while in state-run institutions, it is claimed, 35 to 40% of women change their original intention to terminate a pregnancy²⁸.

Thus, since 2020, a consolidated repressive regime has been taking shape in Belarus: mass repression, the liquidation of independent NGOs and media outlets, and the suppression of feminist and LGBT+ initiatives into exile or underground. Anti-gender policies are being reinforced through the "anti-LGBT propaganda" law, increased anti-LGBT+ censorship, and the rhetoric of «traditional values.» The lack of protection from domestic violence, restrictions on reproductive rights, and state censorship create a systemic oppression, where LGBT+ and feminist causes are labeled as threats to the state.

25 Occupational Safety and Health (2022). *The list of professions prohibited for women has been amended.* <https://ohranatruda.of.by/izmenen-spisok-professij-zapreshchennykh-dlya-zhenshchin-2022.html>

26 Tochka.by. (2025, October 24). *In Belarus, they are escaping jobs prohibited for women - what is allowed.* https://tochka.by/articles/life/v_belarusi_ukhodyat_ot_zapreshchennykh_dlya_zhenshchin_rabot_chno_mozhno/

27 Zerkalo.io. (2025, October 18). *Authorities are trying to persuade Belarusian women to give birth and avoid abortions, using scare tactics on hospital websites. But not everything they say is accurate—we explain.* <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/111146.html>

28 Deutsche Welle (2026, January 30). *Will private clinics in Belarus be banned from performing abortions?* <https://www.dw.com/ru/castnym-klinikam-v-belarusi-zapretat-provodit-aborty/a-75726574>

2. Georgia

Georgia formally has a fairly well-developed legislative framework aimed at protecting the rights of women and LGBT+ people. Back in 2014, the *Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination* was adopted, aimed at combating discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression²⁹. In 2017, the *Law on the Suppression of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance to Victims of Violence* came into force³⁰, and the Istanbul Convention was ratified. However, in practice, the mechanisms for implementing these norms remain weak: the support system for women who have experienced violence is ineffective³¹, and the anti-discrimination law has been criticized by human rights activists for its lack of effective protection mechanisms³². Since its adoption, not a single court case related to discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity has been recorded, and no official statistics on hate crimes are kept. Researchers and human rights activists say that the adoption of legislation in Georgia was dictated not by an internal conviction in the need for reform, but by pressure from EU institutions and the desire for political and financial gains (Shevtsova 2023).

After 2022, the political and social context in Georgia is characterized by the rise of anti-gender, conservative, and nationalist sentiments, intensified by global crises, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and domestic political polarization. The ruling Georgian Dream party actively uses rhetoric defending "traditional values" and "national sovereignty"³³, while conservative movements contrast "Western values" with Georgian identity and culture³⁴.

In October 2023, Georgia introduced new restrictions on access to abortion services: starting January 1, 2024, women are required to consult with a psychologist or social worker before the procedure³⁵. Furthermore, the permissible period for

29 Parliament of Georgia. (n.d.). *Law of Georgia. On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination*. <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/2339687/0/ru/pdf>

30 Parliament of Georgia. (n.d.). *Law of Georgia. On the Prevention of Violence against Women and/or Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance to Victims of Violence*. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/download/26422/10/ru/pdf>

31 Yana With You. (n.d.). *Georgia* <https://yanawithyou.org/georgia>

32 Fišerová, Z. (2023). *LGBTIQ activism in Georgia* (Master's thesis). <https://theses.cz/id/ndx1yh/DP-fiserova-final.pdf>

33 Heinrich Boll Foundation. (2025, April 16). *Protecting "the people": How anti-LGBTQ+ ideas help Georgian Dream consolidate power*. <https://ge.boell.org/en/2025/04/16/protecting-people-how-anti-lgbtq-ideas-help-georgian-dream-consolidate-power>

34 CEEOL. (2021) *The LGBTQ issue as a complementary tool for polarization in post-Soviet countries – the case of Georgia*. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/chapter-detail?id=1119589>

35 DOXA. (2023, November 9). *Starting in 2024, pregnant women in Georgia will be required to consult with a psychologist and social worker before having an abortion*. <https://doxa.team/news/2023-11-09-abortion>

medical abortions is being reduced from 10 to 7 weeks. Human rights activists and healthcare professionals criticize these measures as they could hinder access to safe abortions, contribute to an increase in illegal and unsafe abortions, and are contrary to international health and human rights standards³⁶.

Georgia has repealed the list of professions banned for women, but restrictions remain for pregnant women³⁷. However, human rights activists note that the lack of transparent mechanisms for regulating the transfer of pregnant women from hazardous to safe jobs creates additional barriers for women due to employer concerns.

The Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, also known as the *Foreign Agent Law*, similar to a similar Russian law, was passed despite widespread protests and entered into force on August 1, 2024.³⁸

According to the law, all media outlets and non-governmental organizations receiving more than 20% of their funding from foreign sources are required to register in a special "Foreign Influence Transparency Registry" as "organizations pursuing the interests of a foreign power". In May 2025, a new law, *On the Registration of Foreign Agents*, was adopted, extending similar requirements to individuals acting on behalf of or under the control of a foreign principal and participating in political or other public activities on its behalf³⁹. Such entities must regularly submit detailed reports on their activities and finances, and all their publications and materials must be labeled as having been prepared by a "foreign agent". Failure to comply with these requirements carries criminal penalties, including imprisonment. In the summer of 2025, the consequences of the law became clear: in August, the bank accounts of seven Georgian NGOs were frozen in connection with a case concerning "aiding and assisting in sabotage and hostile activities". Feminist and queer initiatives were not among them, but this measure could have serious consequences for the entire human rights sector in Georgia⁴⁰.

36 Center for Informatics and Reproductive Health (CIDSr). (March 27, 2024). *Georgia has imposed dangerous new restrictions on access to abortion*. <https://cidsr.md/ru/news/gruzija-vvela-novye-opasnye-ogranichenija-na-dostup-k-abortam/>

37 ADC Memorial. (2020, March 6). *Results of the fight against lists of professions banned for women: three years of the #AllJobs4AllWomen campaign*. <https://adcmemorial.org/novosti/3-years-alljobs4allwomen/>

38 Caucasian Knot. (2024, May 23). *Law of Georgia "On Transparency of Foreign Influence"*. <https://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/399856>

39 Paper. (2025, May 30). *Who can be declared a "foreign agent" in Georgia? An analysis of the new law from Paper Kartuli*. <https://paperpaper.io/kogo-mogut-obyavit-inoagentom-v-gr/>

40 Echo of the Caucasus. (2025, August 27). *Bank accounts of seven NGOs frozen in Georgia*. <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/zamorozheny-bankovskie-scheta-semi-organizatsiy-grazhdanskogo-obschestva/33514243.html>

In September 2024, the Georgian Parliament adopted the *Law on Family Values and the Protection of Minors* and a package of 18 accompanying amendments, which entered into force on October 3, 2024⁴¹. The law imposes broad restrictions targeting the LGBT+ community: it bans same-sex marriage and the adoption of children by LGBT+ individuals, as well as any medical interventions for the purpose of “gender reassignment”. Only the biological sex assigned to a person at birth is permitted to be indicated in state documents. Particular attention is paid to “LGBT propaganda”: it prohibits the dissemination of information “aimed at popularizing a person’s belonging to a particular gender, same-sex relationships, or incest” in educational institutions, as well as the display of scenes of same-sex relationships in the media, advertising, and cinema. The law also prohibits public events and gatherings that could be construed as “propaganda of same-sex relationships”.

The opaque and vague legal language creates the risk of being interpreted broadly, potentially extending restrictions to any information related to LGBT+ people, regardless of its nature or context. Furthermore, the emphasis on banning “LGBT propaganda” in education hinders the development of high-quality sex education, which is already lacking in Georgia on a systematic basis⁴². As in Russia and Belarus, Georgian authorities promote such legislative initiatives under the guise of “child protection” and “traditional” or “family values”.

Despite the absence of registered cases of “propaganda” and significant instances of blocking and censorship, human rights organizations have recorded an increase in violence against LGBT+ people: the very next day after the law was passed, transgender woman Kesaria Abramidze was murdered, and prominent activist Nata Talikishvili was attacked⁴³. In 2025, the Georgian parliament adopted amendments completely eliminating the term “gender” from Georgian legislation⁴⁴.

Thus, over the past three years, Georgian authorities have tightened their grip on civil society, restricted reproductive rights and the rights of LGBT+ people, and legalized discriminatory practices under the pretext of protecting “traditional values” and national sovereignty. The Georgian Orthodox Church plays a significant role in shaping and promoting

41 Deutsche Welle. (2024, September 17). *The Georgian Parliament passed a law banning “LGBT propaganda”*. <https://www.dw.com/ru/parlament-gruzii-prinal-zakon-o-zaprete-propagandy-lgbt/a-70239532>

42 Federal Center for Health Education (BZgA). (2018). *Sexuality education in the WHO European Region: Georgia*. <https://europe.ippf.org/sites/europe/files/2018-05/Factsheet%20Georgia.pdf>

43 ILGA-Europe. (2025). *Annual review of the human rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people covering the period of January to December 2024: Georgia*. <https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2025/02/Annual-Review-2025-Georgia.pdf>

44 Vesti Kavkaza (2025, April 2). *Georgia has removed the word “gender” from its legislation*. <https://vestikavkaza.ru/news/gruzia-isklucila-slovo-gender-iz-svoego-zakonodatelstva.html>

such initiatives, exerting significant influence on political decisions and actively participating in public campaigns against gender equality and the rights of LGBT+ people.

3. Kazakhstan

Following the January 2022 protests sparked by the sharp rise in liquefied natural gas prices, Kazakhstan experienced a political and social upheaval, with conservative sentiments and authoritarian state control growing stronger⁴⁵. The external factor of Russia's invasion of Ukraine also had a significant impact: on the one hand, Kazakhstan is attempting to maintain a balance between Russia and European and North American countries, while not expressing unequivocal support for Russia's actions. On the other hand, Russian influence is increasing through economic mechanisms⁴⁶.

In recent years, anti-LGBT+ sentiment has increased in Kazakhstan, manifesting itself in both public debate and legislative initiatives. In February 2024, Kazakhstan passed a law banning LGBT+ people from mentoring orphans⁴⁷. In April 2024, the ruling Amanat party proposed amendments to the *draft law On Mass Media* to ban the "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations"⁴⁸. That same year, in May, the Kazakhstan Union of Parents launched a petition to ban "LGBT propaganda", which was partially accepted by the authorities: the authorities promised to "protect adolescents and children from propaganda and the cultivation of sexual relations"⁴⁹. Representatives of the Kazakh clergy also promote anti-gender rhetoric, supporting anti-LGBT+ initiatives. The chief imam and representatives of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan regularly make public statements against "LGBT propaganda", feminism, and sex education, appealing to "traditional values" and the need to adhere to Islamic norms⁵⁰. Representatives of Christian religions also periodically speak out against LGBT+ people⁵¹.

45 Center for Eastern Studies (OSW). (2023, August 14). *Kazakhstan: Heading towards uncertainty*. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2023-08-14/kazakhstan-heading-towards-uncertainty>

46 Chatham House. (2024, February 29). *Russia's influence in Kazakhstan is increasing despite the war in Ukraine*. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/02/russias-influence-kazakhstan-increasing-despite-war-ukraine>

47 Azattyk Asia. (February 23, 2024). *Tokayev signed a law banning the adoption and mentoring of orphans by LGBT+ people*. <https://www.azattyqasia.org/a/32832434.html>

48 Power. (2024, April 5). *Deputies propose banning media coverage of LGBT people*. <https://vlast.kz/novosti/59600-zapretit-smi-pisat-o-predstavitelah-lgbt-predlagaut-deputaty.html>

49 Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2024, August 6). *Decision on the results of consideration of the petition*. <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mam/documents/details/702227?lang=ru>

50 Exclusive.kz. (2025, March 20). *Kazakhstan's chief imam spoke out against LGBT and blamed the West*. <https://exclusive.kz/glavnyj-imam-kazahstana-vystupil-protiv-lgbt-i-obvinil-zapad/>

51 TASS. (December 20, 2023). *Catholic Church leaders in Kazakhstan have banned the blessing of homosexual couples*. <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/19593445>

On December 18, 2025, while this study was being conducted, the Majilis, the lower house of Kazakhstan's Parliament, approved amendments banning so-called "propaganda of pedophilia and non-traditional sexual orientation". Then, after data collection for the study had already been completed, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev signed the law⁵². The new law establishes penalties for posting and distributing illegal content with signs of "LGBT propaganda" in the press and social media.

The rise of anti-LGBT+ rhetoric is accompanied by increased censorship. In July 2022, the cartoon "Lightyear" was blocked in Kazakhstan due to a scene featuring a same-sex kiss⁵³. In February 2024, under the pretext of "protecting children from harmful information", authorities blocked a website for LGBT+ teenagers. SelfTanu.kz, which contains information on sexual health and the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities⁵⁴. Given the lack of systematic sex education in schools in Kazakhstan, blocking such resources significantly impairs adolescents' access to quality information on sexual health. Thus, even in the absence of legislation similar to Russia's that directly prohibits "LGBT propaganda" or the LGBT+ movement, Kazakhstan has mechanisms for anti-LGBT+ censorship and corresponding law enforcement practices.

Since September 2023, Kazakhstan has had a public *Register of Persons Receiving Money or Other Property from Foreign States, International, and Foreign Organizations*, maintained by the Ministry of Finance⁵⁵. The registry was last updated in March 2025, when it included 200 individuals and legal entities, including human rights organizations and foundations, trade unions, journalists, and activists⁵⁶. These include women's feminist initiatives (for example, the Society of Women Small Entrepreneurs). As of September 2025, Kazakhstan has no legislation imposing any burden on those included in this registry, although discussions of such legislation periodically intensify. For example, in February 2025, Majilis Deputy Irina Smirnova (People's Party of Kazakhstan) proposed that the government develop a law on foreign agents that would restrict the activities of "undesirable" NGOs for the sake of "protecting national interests"⁵⁷. However,

52 Deutsche Welle. (2025, December 30). Kazakhstan approves law banning "LGBT propaganda". <https://www.dw.com/ru/v-kazahstane-odobrili-zakon-o-zaprete-propagandy-lgbt/a-75343438>

53 Equaldex. (n.d.). LGBT rights in Kazakhstan. <https://www.equaldex.com/region/kazakhstan>

54 Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity (ECOM). (2024, February 22). A website for LGBT teenagers was blocked in Kazakhstan. <https://ecom.ngo/en/news/website-lgbt-teenagers-was-blocked-kazakhstan/>

55 Deutsche Welle. (2023, September 22). Kazakhstan has published its "foreign agent list". Why? <https://www.dw.com/ru/kazakhstan-opublikoval-svoj-spisok-inoagentov-zacem/a-66898509>

56 Orda.kz. (2025, March 18). Kazakhstan's "foreign agent list" has been expanded to include new companies: who is being financed from abroad. <https://orda.kz/kazahstanskij-spisok-inoagentov-popolnilsja-novymi-kompanijami-kogo-finansirujut-iz-za-rubezha-399364/>

57 Power. (2025, February 12). A deputy from the People's Party of Kazakhstan asks for a law "on foreign agents" to be developed. <https://vlast.kz/novosti/63813-deputat-ot-narodnoj-partii-kazahstana-prosit-razrabotat-zakon-ob-inoagentah.html>

the Ministry of Justice publicly stated that the government currently has no plans to develop such a law⁵⁸.

Kazakhstani human rights organizations working on women's and LGBT+ rights are facing pressure. For example, the feminist and LGBT+ organization Feminita has been denied registration several times⁵⁹, its founders have been detained⁶⁰, and even fined for leading an unregistered organization⁶¹. Furthermore, in October 2024, one parliament member proposed recognizing this organization as extremist⁶². At the same time, there are pro-government women's organizations supported by the state (for example, Rahym, led by Bibinur Sheralieva, a supporter of the Kazakh president⁶³).

In April 2024, Kazakhstan adopted a law on domestic violence, which became one of the most discussed in recent history⁶⁴. Its adoption followed the high-profile trial of former Minister of National Economy Kuandyk Bishimbayev, who was convicted of the brutal murder of his wife, Saltanat Nukenova. This event sparked a wave of public outrage and protests against the state's inaction in protecting women's rights. The new law introduced several key changes: battery and intentional infliction of minor bodily harm were transferred from the Code of Administrative Offenses to the Criminal Code, making them punishable by law. Reconciliation was eliminated in cases involving physical violence and cruelty to minors. The law increased penalties for serious crimes against children: murder, rape, or sexual assault of minors now carry life imprisonment without alternative punishment. In addition, a new article, Article 121-1 of the Criminal Code, was introduced, criminalizing sexual harassment of persons under 16 years of age.

Despite these important changes, human rights activists note that the law still does not define "domestic violence" as a separate offense, which leaves room for interpretation

- 58 Power. (2025, March 5). *The idea of a law on foreign agents failed to generate enthusiasm in parliament*. <https://vlast.kz/politika/64138-idea-zakona-ob-inoagentah-ne-vyzvala-entuziazma-v-parlamente.html>
- 59 Human Rights Watch. (2019, September 13). *Kazakhstan: Feminist group denied registration*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/13/kazakhstan-feminist-group-denied-registration>
- 60 Eurasian Coalition on Health, Rights, Gender, and Sexual Diversity (ECOM). (2024). *Central Asian countries: the rapid narrowing of democracy*. https://ecom.ngo/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/ECOM_Asia_democratia_2024_rus.pdf
- 61 Tirek. (2025, July 14). *Renewed attacks on foreign-funded NGOs protest restrictions despite protective court ruling*. <https://tirek.info/renewed-attacks-on-foreign-funded-ngos-protest-restrictions-despite-protective-court-ruling/>
- 62 Tengrinews. (2024, October 9). *Kazakh deputy proposes declaring feminist group extremist in Kazakhstan*. https://en.tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/kazakh-deputy-proposes-declaring-feminist-group-extremist-in-264444/
- 63 Respublika. (2024, March 6). *The Almaty city administration denied permission for a feminist women's march but approved a rally for a Tokayev supporter*. <https://respublika.kz.media/archives/118421>
- 64 Kosa.media. (2024, July 8). *How the "Saltanat Law" Came to Be*. <https://kosa.media/2024/07/kak-poiavilsya-zakon-saltanat/>

and weakens protection for victims⁶⁵. Furthermore, Kazakhstan has not ratified the Istanbul Convention. Kazakhstan also does not have specific anti-discrimination legislation, although work is currently underway to develop one⁶⁶.

In 2021, Kazakhstan repealed the list of professions banned for women⁶⁷. However, as journalists and human rights activists note, restrictions for women in the workplace still exist⁶⁸.

According to current legislation in Kazakhstan, a woman has the right to terminate a pregnancy at her own request within 12 weeks. Between 12 and 22 weeks, abortion is permitted only if there are medical or social indications and a medical commission's approval⁶⁹. The law does not stipulate a mandatory "day of silence" before the procedure, and there are no public initiatives to ban abortion in the country.

Thus, the Kazakhstani context of recent years has been characterized by a contradictory combination of limited progress in protecting women's rights and a simultaneous increase in repression against LGBT+ people and independent civil society. Anti-LGBT+ rhetoric, legislative initiatives on "propaganda", blocking of information resources, and pressure on feminist and queer organizations have formed a persistent pattern of discrimination and the narrowing of public space. Meanwhile, positive changes remain partial and are not supported by systemic anti-discrimination guarantees. As a result, Kazakhstan's gender policy is being constructed as selective and hierarchical: the state demonstrates a willingness to respond to high-profile cases of violence, but simultaneously uses the anti-gender agenda as a tool of political control and symbolic mobilization.

65 Human Rights Watch. (2024, April 30). *Kazakhstan: New Law to Strengthen Women's Protections Improved, but Incomplete*. <https://www.hrw.org/ru/news/2024/04/30/kazakhstan-new-law-protect-women-improved-incomplete>

66 Inbusiness.kz. (2024, June 30). *Anti-discrimination legislation continues to be developed in Kazakhstan*. <https://inbusiness.kz/ru/last/antidiskriminacionnoe-zakonodatelstvo-prodolzhayut-razrabatyvat-v-rk>

67 Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2021, September 25). *Kazakhstan has repealed the list of jobs restricted for women*. <https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/ombudsman/press/news/details/262368?lang=ru>

68 Orda.kz. (2024, June 17). *"You have to carry heavy things there". Where women in Kazakhstan still aren't hired*. <https://orda.kz/tam-nado-tjazhesti-taskat-kuda-zhenshin-v-kazahstane-do-sih-por-ne-berut-na-rabotu-387807/>

69 Zakon.kz. (2020, October 19). *What are the rules for terminating pregnancies in Kazakhstan?* <https://www.zakon.kz/redaktsiia-zakonkz/5044427-po-kakim-pravilam-v-kazahstane.html>

The state of the human rights sector in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan

In recent years, the human rights sectors in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan have faced a systematic narrowing of their operational space. This is caused by a combination of repressive legislation, administrative pressure, and politically motivated attacks on civil society. An analysis of testimonies from human rights defenders from the three countries reveals that despite differences in political regimes and institutional contexts, the mechanisms of pressure are similar, creating similar risks to the sustainability of the sector.

Belarusian human rights activists confirm that the human rights sector has been effectively destroyed as a legal and public arena since 2020. As Alisa Sarmant, director of the Belarusian trans organization TG House, puts it:

"After 2020, the situation worsened significantly: due to repression, many activists were forced to flee Belarus. Some queer organizations and initiatives were liquidated, while others were effectively forced out of the country. Unfortunately, most were never able to fully resume their work in exile, and the opportunities for those who continue to operate remotely are severely limited, as it is now impossible to work legally and safely within Belarus".

Another human rights activist from Belarus, who prefers to remain anonymous, notes:

"Of course, feminist LGBT+ organizations also fell under this repression, because no sector was spared. That is, both historical and cultural organizations were closed. Basically, everyone. The repressive crackdown affected everyone".

At the same time, the human rights activist emphasizes the particular vulnerability of LGBT+ and feminist organizations and initiatives:

"Even before 2020, we could say we were a women's feminist organization, and it was relatively safe. Now, not having children, feminism, child-free, as they call it, is such a threat to Belarusian statehood. For this, of course, organizations are being persecuted".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

As a result, Belarusian human rights organizations have been forced to operate either remotely, in exile, or underground. Both formats have their limitations and don't solve all security issues. Alisa Sarmant, for example, notes:

"Working remotely is much more difficult. And it's not always safe even for those who have already left, because many still have relatives in Belarus. Security forces exert pressure on the parents and loved ones of activists in exile. Because of this, some have been forced to abandon their activities entirely, simply out of fear for their loved ones. The underground format also deprives human rights activists of the opportunity to reach new audiences and engage in widespread outreach. Assistance has to be provided behind closed doors, primarily to those communities that were formed earlier."

In these circumstances, human rights organizations are forced to devote significant attention and time to security issues:

"Of course, we now have to devote a great deal of time to security issues—especially after the extremist designation. We regularly conduct trainings, consult with people, and constantly remind them about digital and personal security measures. This has become a separate and ongoing focus of our work."

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Human rights activists noted that they now carefully monitor the security of messaging apps and have been forced to abandon the use of chatbots to be able to permanently delete data. Therefore, ensuring security requires additional resources and necessitates abandoning the automation of certain processes.

Belarusian human rights activists note a high risk of burnout; human rights work in such conditions is often carried out on a volunteer basis and is exhausting:

"I assure you that if you were to ask 30 people from the Belarusian NGO sector at random right now, 'How long have you been working for free?' no one would know how to answer, no one keeps any timesheets."

Nasta Bazar, human rights defender, Belarus

However, despite numerous risks and limitations, human rights activists note the resilience of the Belarusian human rights sector and the general desire of people to resist ("resilience" as an anonymous research participant from Belarus noted).

In Georgia, the situation is characterized not by a sudden collapse, but by a gradual authoritarian drift and institutionalized pressure on civil society. Informants emphasize that the backlash began even before 2022:

"I was always against starting the countdown from 2022, because, in my opinion, the backlash began in 2018, when the constitutional amendment was adopted declaring that a family can only be a union of a man and a woman. After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the situation definitely escalated very quickly."

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

After 2022, pressure on civil society increased sharply with the adoption of a series of repressive laws, strengthening administrative control over human rights activities and hindering financial support from abroad.

"There were several waves of repression. This led to the closure or termination of many organizations. Mainly, due to the intensifying repression, regional, small grassroots organizations decided to cease their activities. And those of us who remain, somewhat acknowledge that we can no longer receive any new grants and will at some point face financial difficulties. So this is a very well-thought-out plan to shut down civil society activities in Georgia."

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

In a situation of intense pressure from the state and the impossibility of legally receiving foreign funding, many human rights initiatives and independent media operate on a volunteer basis:

"But somehow, most of these online media, for example, or opposition television channels that are critical of the situation and try to cover all the pressing issues we are currently facing, are still operating. I don't know how, but they still manage to survive. But in fact, I know that most of the staff work voluntarily. There are some organizations that are still operating, but their employees haven't been paid for several months. And most human rights defenders continue to work with victims of various human rights violations of their own free will. So... The situation is quite tense".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

Georgian human rights defenders, especially those from LGBT+ organizations, operate in a climate of high uncertainty and risk. They are forced to balance the tasks of informing and providing services to the community with the desire to protect themselves from unwanted attention from the state and far-right groups:

"We try to emphasize positive visibility while avoiding attacks on our services by far-right groups. Therefore, we continue our activities, closely monitoring our public communications".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

The personal safety of human rights defenders and LGBT+ activists is also constantly under threat: study participants mentioned attacks on transgender persons, anonymous, abusive phone threats, provocations by "titushki" (agents hired by the authorities to aggressively attack activists; Georgian human rights defenders used this Russian word, emphasizing that the practice itself has its roots in Russia), and posters with photographs of activists labeled "enemies of the nation".

The decision to continue working despite state pressure is a political choice and a means of resistance for Georgian human rights defenders. Thus, while some civil society and critical media formally remain in Georgia, they operate under constant threat, financial instability, and legal uncertainty.

In Kazakhstan, the human rights sector operates in a more hybrid, yet also repressive, context,

combining formal access to some forms of human rights activity with systemic discrimination. For example, Gulzada Serzhan, co-founder of the queer feminist initiative Feminita, notes that the LGBT+ and feminist movement in Kazakhstan has successfully developed in recent years:

"In terms of protecting LGBT+ rights, we have made great progress. In my opinion, the movement was very strong. Many initiatives were created".

At the same time, the human rights activist reported difficulties registering human rights non-profit organizations:

"It's difficult for non-profit organizations to register because they are all under government scrutiny. The Ministry of Justice never makes it easy to register and operate because of this old rhetoric against 'foreign agents'".

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

In other words, the Kazakh authorities systematically fail to respect the right to freedom of association.

Since 2020, the human rights sector, and especially queer initiatives, have been living in a constant crisis response mode due to a variety of circumstances:

"In Kazakhstan, and I believe in many other countries in our region, we seemed to have begun surviving in 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic began. We are faced with constant force majeure events that weren't included in our crisis plans, and we are constantly forced to change strategies and respond to what's happening. Problems with access to gender-affirmative assistance, constant changes in decision-making, the development of the anti-gender movement, wars affecting our countries, and migration issues. Speaking of the anti-gender movement, we can say it emerged and strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Activists, both men and women, who are now leaders of the anti-gender movement, stood in solidarity with each other during the adoption of the new Health Code in 2020, opposing new regulations on mandatory childhood vaccinations".

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's existing "foreign agents" registry hasn't yet had a significant impact on human rights defenders, although the NGO sector is generally experiencing a crisis:

"But it's already clear that the state is engaging less with the human rights community".

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

As Zhanar Sekerbayeva, co-founder of the queer-feminist initiative "Feminita", notes:

"The current situation is very difficult. I believe it's the most difficult yet".

Importantly, interviews with human rights defenders took place before the "LGBT propaganda" law came into force, so the negative assessments and predictions of the study participants were confirmed during the data analysis.

Kazakhstani queer and feminist human rights defenders face a variety of forms of repression and persecution: police raids on queer spaces, the closure of safe queer spaces under duress, provocations and attacks by "titushki" (as in Georgia, Kazakhstani human rights defenders used a Russian word, also referencing Russian practices), surveillance of activists by security forces, false denunciations (for example, calling the police for an alleged "orgy"), and arrests on trumped-up charges and under non-arrestable statutes (for example, for swearing in public). As noted by study participants, the more public the activities of human rights defenders, the greater the risks.

Under current conditions, human rights organizations are forced to revise their security protocols. For example, they're ceasing to publicly disclose the location and time of events and developing tactics to avoid conflict with provocateurs:

We don't currently disclose the date and address, but believe me, the National Security Committee always knows where we are. Even if we give out the address in a secret chat, they show up in that secret location every time. So we decided, 'Okay, we know they're coming.' We're just trying to avoid this scandalous... appearance of women who are 'titushki,' who, as you know, are activists in this larger anti-gender movement. So if these titushki show up, we try to avoid any contact with them, so we simply try to leave the place".

Zhanar Sekerbayeva, Feminita, Kazakhstan

In developing new approaches to security, LGBT+ organizations in Kazakhstan are also looking to the experiences of other countries where “LGBT propaganda” laws and similar ones have already been adopted:

“We see the experiences of other people and organizations from other countries that have faced the adoption of similar laws, and we are learning from this experience”.

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

Overall, all three countries are characterized by a narrowing of civil society space, the state’s use of an anti-gender agenda as a tool for political mobilization and pressure, and the financial and legal stifling of human rights organizations. Common features include the forced unpaid work of activists, increased risks and vulnerabilities, and the need to resort to survival strategies. However, the differences are fundamental. In Belarus, the human rights sector has been almost completely driven into exile and underground, and repression is total and punitive. In Georgia, formal opportunities for activity remain, but they are undermined by repressive laws, strict state control, and the loss of funding. In Kazakhstan, repression is less direct but systemic: it is implemented through the denial of registration for NGOs, discrimination, persecution of activists and human rights defenders, and the adoption of Russian repressive models.

A comparative analysis of the state of queer and feminist initiatives

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
The general state of the human rights sector	Almost destroyed as a legal field; most organizations are in exile or underground.	Hybrid model: formally preserved, but operates under strong pressure from the state and right-wing radical activists.	Hybrid model: formally, activity is possible, but under conditions of systemic discrimination and pressure from right-wing activists.
Legal context	Repressive practice (in the absence of law) on the ban of "LGBT propaganda" or the recognition of the LGBT+ movement as extremist, extremist statuses, and the actual ban on public activity.	Repressive laws (on the ban on "LGBT propaganda", on foreign agents), restricting access to foreign funding.	A register of "foreign agents" (without corresponding legislation) was adopted, and a law banning "LGBT propaganda" was adopted.
Work format	Emigration, remote work, underground initiatives.	Public activity with careful communication (to avoid falling under the vague formulations of repressive laws).	Open activities with enhanced security measures (e.g. closed events).
Financing	Limited; activities are often volunteer or low-paid.	Foreign funding is effectively blocked; some NGO employees are left without salaries.	A register of "foreign agents" exists; while direct financial sanctions are few, a general crisis in the sector is brewing.

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Repressive practices	Mass liquidations of NGOs, extremist designations, criminal and administrative prosecution, pressure on relatives of activists who have left.	Blocking the accounts of large (not yet queer or feminist) NGOs (but not yet queer or feminist), administrative inspections, pressure from right-wing radicals.	Police raids, arrests, "titushki" provocations, surveillance.
Risks for activists	High risk of persecution, emigration as a forced strategy.	Physical attacks, threats, public harassment.	Pressure from security forces and right-wing activists, and publicity increases the risks.
Public visibility	Sharply reduced, work in closed mode.	It remains, but communication is cautious.	Partially preserved, but events are often held behind closed doors.
General dynamics	Total repression and displacement.	Financial and administrative strangulation with formal preservation.	Gradual tightening.

Anti-LGBT+ policies in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan

This chapter examines anti-LGBT+ policies in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan based on interviews with human rights defenders and activists working directly with communities in these countries. The analysis focuses on how government decisions, law enforcement practices, and public rhetoric shape the conditions for repression, self-censorship, and violence against LGBT+ people. Comparing the three cases reveals both common regional trends (increased control, marginalization, and criminalization) and differences in the mechanisms and intensity of anti-LGBT+ policies.

In Belarus, anti-LGBT+ policies are overtly repressive and punitive in nature and are implemented through a combination of formal legal mechanisms and extralegal practices of forceful pressure.

According to Alisa Sarmant, director of TG House, one of the tools used to pressure queer and especially transgender persons is Resolution No. 24, adopted in April 2024, which effectively allows any images of LGBT+ people to be equated with pornography. She notes that there are already known cases of transgender persons being prosecuted for distributing pornography due to personal photographs published on social media or even found by law enforcement in their phone's photo gallery. However, Alisa Sarmant emphasizes:

"It's impossible to reliably estimate the scale of how often this happens".

Human rights activists emphasize that it was precisely after the adoption of Resolution No. 24 that an unprecedented wave of arrests occurred. Alisa Sarmant assesses this as a planned attack against the queer community and an attempt to create a network of informants:

"A few months after Resolution No. 24 came into force, a massive wave of arrests of queer people occurred. We directly attribute this to its adoption. Essentially, it was a targeted purge. It was clear that the actions were coordinated and occurring almost simultaneously. It appears that one of the goals was to gather contacts of people in Belarus involved in activism, including feminist activities. We call this a wave because both direct and indirect indicators point to a planned attack on the community".

She also notes the practice of "fake dates" organized by law enforcement agencies:

"Men who meet on dating sites are targeted. A law enforcement [officer] creates fake profiles, poses as [a] gay [man], and offers to meet. When a person arrives, they show [a law enforcement] identification and begin questioning them—about their acquaintances, other gay men, connections, and contacts. Typically, people aren't even detained at these meetings: the main goal is to gather information about others. This effectively creates an informal network of contacts".

Repression against LGBT+ people in Belarus is accompanied by preventative intimidation. As Alisa Sarmant explains:

"The law banning so-called 'LGBT propaganda' hasn't yet been formally adopted, but in practice, law enforcement agencies have long acted as if it were in effect. They've been so deliberately 'pumped' with this agenda that many have simply lost track of the actual legal status of these regulations. They're convinced such a law already exists and can be used for detentions. This was the case even a year and a half to two years ago: back then, there were only media statements and political rhetoric about the possible adoption of the law, but in practice, it was already interpreted as an existing law".

Repressive legislation in Belarus not only has a direct punitive effect but also contributes to increased self-censorship within the LGBT+ community and related initiatives:

"People are now much less likely to post photos and information about their relationships on social media. Many are aware of cases of harassment and are therefore afraid to make unnecessary public appearances. Queer initiatives and organizations have also become more cautious: we try not to show faces or distribute photographs of participants unnecessarily, as this can be dangerous".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Transgender persons are a particularly vulnerable group: starting in 2025, the Belarusian Ministry of Health changed gender affirmative procedures, replacing the sexologist with a psychiatrist and addiction specialist on the commission. As Alisa Sarmant puts it,

"This effectively reinforces the approach that views transgenderism as some kind of mental disorder".

This is accompanied by the systematic creation of barriers to passing the commission. As Alisa Sarmant emphasizes, the procedure is strictly tied to a specific list of specific specialists – the opinions of other doctors are not accepted.

"There is an approved, limited list of specialists authorized to work with gender affirmative procedures, and you must only contact them – opinions from other doctors are not accepted. People cannot get an appointment with the necessary specialists for months. 'Vacations' or unexpected absences constantly occur. This primarily affects the work of a psychiatrist and an addiction specialist who treats transgender patients and is responsible for issuing referrals to the commission. When the reception desk hears that a request is related to transition, the required specialist is often unavailable, allegedly on sick leave. This all seems like a deliberate delay".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Furthermore, people are *"deliberately given various diagnoses, some kind of mental disorders",* in order to formally deny them access to the commission.

Georgia's anti-LGBT+ policies are complex and uneven: while repressive laws are not formally enforced directly, they create intense pressure and uncertainty, limiting the activities of human rights defenders and fueling violence.

Georgian human rights activists emphasize that the law banning “LGBT propaganda” has not yet been enforced, and they are unaware of any prosecutions, censorship, book bans, or blocking. As one anonymous human rights defender noted,

“I believe the purpose and objective of such laws is not so much to ensure compliance as to create an effect of intimidation, as they [the laws] instill fear and high risks, leading to self-censorship”.

This has led to “a general weakening of civil society and a loss of its potential”.

Repressive legislation forces many LGBT+ people in Georgia to leave the country, which has an impact on the activist community:

“This is a very serious problem: many activists and community members, especially transgender persons, have been forced to flee the country. Of course, this has greatly weakened local activism.”

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

The adoption of the “LGBT propaganda” law in Georgia, according to human rights activists, not only legitimizes state discrimination but also directly contributes to the rise of hate-motivated violence by reinforcing a sense of impunity. Describing the consequences, one informant emphasizes:

“The radicalization of political homophobia and transphobia, as well as their justification or normalization by political figures imbued with homophobic and transphobic statements, has increased the sense of impunity, leading to an overall increase in hate crimes, especially those with transphobic motives. Furthermore, new trends in hate crimes have emerged that we have never encountered before, but most victims do not report them to the police because the community no longer perceives the police as a supportive and safe mechanism”.

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

The situation of transgender individuals in Georgia has become particularly vulnerable following the adoption of the “LGBT propaganda” law, as the new regulations have effectively deprived them of the opportunity to transition and receive related medical care. As an anonymous human rights defender

from Georgia emphasizes, one of the key provisions of the law is not simply a restriction, but rather *"the criminalization of services related to transition, including surgeries, hormone therapy – basically everything"*. Moreover, liability extends to medical professionals: any doctor *"willing to provide medical care to a transgender person is at risk of criminal prosecution and imprisonment for a term of one to four years"*. Tellingly, even between the law's adoption in September and its entry into force in December 2024, when it was formally *"still possible to legally obtain, for example, hormonal endocrinological care"*, medical professionals were already denying services to transgender persons due to fear of prosecution. This indicates that the law's repressive effect began even before its formal implementation, denying transgender individuals access to basic health care.

In Kazakhstan, the "LGBT propaganda" law was still in the discussion and parliamentary adoption phase. Therefore, the interviews were only able to discuss the hypothetical implications of this law and the situation leading up to its adoption. The debate and possible adoption of the "LGBT propaganda" law in Kazakhstan was perceived by human rights defenders as a multifaceted threat, extending far beyond the rights of LGBT+ people and affecting the foundations of human rights, security, and societal dynamics in general.

Kazakh human rights activists note that the anti-LGBT+ amendments are being used by the state not only for ideological reasons but also as a convenient mechanism for strengthening control and restricting civil liberties. Independent activist Rakhat Sadykov, for example, speaks of the possible consequences:

"This isn't a specific law. It's a collection of amendments to existing laws in Kazakhstan. They even touch on the laws on children's rights, the law on mass media, [...] and the labor code. About ten laws and one labor code. And I think this will greatly affect not only LGBT+ people, but also fundamentally affect freedom of speech in Kazakhstan and the media. It will probably be possible to somehow push any undesirable person into the LGBT+ community. If you're talking about it, if you're defending them, if you're quoting them, then maybe you have ties to them, and so on. Because, again, it's unclear what is meant by propaganda. These amendments don't provide a clear definition. It simply states that propaganda is any positive mention of LGBT+ people".

Gulzada Serzhan notes that, as in Russia, this law could be the first in a series of significant attacks on human rights:

"Thus, the concept of human rights will be violated. This will become one of the ways in which human rights in general are violated. This is the first step, as in Russia".

Human rights activists also link the discussion and adoption of the law to an increase in hate-motivated violence. Even during the discussion of the amendments, a worsening situation for transgender persons and an increase in cases of violence are being recorded. The law banning "LGBT propaganda" is seen as a signal to society that aggression is acceptable. Furthermore, human rights activists point to potential consequences of the law, including increased fear, self-censorship, and vulnerability among LGBT+ people in general. A rise in pro-migration sentiments in the community is expected, as people are already concerned about their safety.

Speaking about censorship and blocking of LGBT+ content in Kazakhstan, human rights activists emphasize that while these are currently targeted rather than widespread, they are already demonstrating potential mechanisms for pressure. For example, one research participant notes:

"I don't know of many blockings... And the last case, which we probably all know, is SelfTanu. I don't know of any other cases of, for example, LGBT+ resources being blocked. SelfTanu, I think, was blocked because it was related to children, because the site was aimed directly at LGBT+ children and LGBT+ teenagers. Therefore, there was an active response from the Ministry of Culture and Information".

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

At the same time, the respondent notes that websites of various queer initiatives and queer media have not been subject to any blocking before. At the same time, blocking queer content in Russia is impacting the LGBT+ community and LGBT+ initiatives in Kazakhstan:

"We encounter blocking more from Russia because, for example, an international trans organization operating in the region has its website blocked in Russia. We were making a podcast, and at some point, we received a message from Roskomnadzor on Yandex. Platform stating that the podcast would be removed".*

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

The situation with transgender rights in Kazakhstan is as follows: on the one hand, formal procedures for transition and legal gender recognition exist, but on the other hand, these procedures are discriminatory in nature (for example, mandatory surgical correction is required for legal recognition) and the level of discrimination and restrictions has been growing recently.

The informant directly links the tightening of legal gender recognition practices to a general shift in political discourse in Kazakhstan and elsewhere: he emphasizes the impact of Trump's transphobic policies on the rights of transgender people worldwide and in Kazakhstan in particular.

"The Supreme Court upheld Trump's decision to deny access to legal gender recognition in the United States as constitutional. And two days later, I read a comment from our deputy about how, you see, in America, so tolerant, they also banned transgender people from changing their documents. And he made this comment in the context of the amendments to the propaganda law. This is catching on very quickly".

Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan share a commonality: they use anti-LGBT+ policies as a tool for broader control over society, where not only direct law enforcement but also fear, self-censorship, and the normalization of violence play a key role. In all three countries, transgender people are the most vulnerable group. However, the differences lie in the forms of implementation: in Belarus, overt violent terror, persecution of LGBT+ people, and criminal prosecutions predominate; in Georgia, there has been a rise in hate-motivated violence and self-censorship in the absence of formal law enforcement; and in Kazakhstan, there has been a gradual but systemic incorporation of anti-LGBT+ norms into legislation, accompanied by a parallel rise in discrimination and anti-gender sentiment.

Comparative characteristics of anti-LGBT+ policies

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Discriminatory legislation	Yes. Resolution No. 24 (2024) allows LGBT+ images to be equated with pornography; the Law on the Rights of the Child recognizes "LGBT propaganda" as dangerous to children; discussion of a law banning "LGBT propaganda"; changes to the gender-affirmative procedures.	Yes. A law banning "LGBT propaganda" has been passed, criminalizing services related to legal gender recognition and gender-affirmative procedures (including hormone therapy and surgeries).	Yes. A law banning "LGBT propaganda" was passed (after the interviews were conducted).
Law enforcement practice	Active punitive use: criminal cases, mass arrests, "fake dates", contact collection.	There is no formal enforcement, but there is a strong preventative effect.	No application yet; risks of broad interpretation after the law is passed.
Violence and hate crimes	High level, including from the security forces; atmosphere of fear.	Increase in hate crimes, especially transphobic ones; declining trust in the police.	Violence is on the rise amid debate over the law; an increase in cases has been recorded, particularly against transgender individuals.

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Hate speech and political rhetoric	Active state homophobic rhetoric; security forces act as if the “propaganda law” has already been passed.	Radicalization of political homophobia and transphobia; normalization of discriminatory discourse.	Anti-LGBT+ rhetoric is increasing in parliament; politicians are citing international conservative initiatives (including the US and Russia).
Access to information and sex education	Severely restricted; public visibility is dangerous; risk of criminal prosecution for content.	The law creates an intimidating effect; self-censorship; risks for educational initiatives.	Partial access remains; there have been targeted blockings (for example, resources for LGBT+ teenagers); there is a risk of expanding censorship.
Blocking and censorship of online content	Yes, within the framework of general censorship; there is a risk of content being classified as “pornography”. Materials from some feminist and queer initiatives have been deemed extremist.	There have been no direct mass blockages recorded, but the risk is high.	Targeted blocking (e.g., resources for LGBT+ teenagers); impact of blocking from the Russian Federation (Roskomnadzor).

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
The status of transgender individuals	The most vulnerable group; complication of passing the commission; delays in procedures; pathologizing of transgenderism (due to the inclusion of a psychiatrist-addiction specialist in the commission).	Criminalization of gender affirming medical surgeries; de facto deprivation of transgender person's access to medical care.	Formally, procedures exist, but surgical correction is mandatory to change documents; refusals and discrimination are on the rise.
The presence of working queer NGOs	Severely restricted; operate under risk, in exile, or underground.	They remain, but are weakened due to the emigration of many activists, and government pressure.	They are functioning; the space is narrowing, but open activity is still possible.
Access to assistance from NGOs	Limited due to risks; caution, anonymization of participants.	There is access, but the community is demoralized.	Access is maintained; NGOs document violence and provide legal and other assistance.
Anti-discrimination legislation	There is no effective protection against discrimination based on SOGI.	Formally, anti-discrimination laws exist, but protections have been weakened by the new law.	There is no effective protection against discrimination based on SOGI, although work is underway on a general framework of anti-discrimination legislation.

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Academic freedom and gender studies	Severely limited within the framework of the general suppression of academic freedom.	The risks are increasing; gender issues are becoming politically sensitive.	Formally possible, but under the risk of stigmatization due to the adoption of the law on "propaganda".
Self-censorship and a climate of fear	Very high level; people avoid publicity, don't post photos, hide their identity.	High level; the law acts as an instrument of intimidation.	Rising levels; anticipation of the law increases fear and migration sentiment.
Migration trends within the community	High (forced emigration).	High, especially among transgender people and activists.	Growing expectations of emigration against the backdrop of possible tightening of legislation.

Anti-gender policies and the state of women's rights in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan

In all three countries, anti-gender policies manifest themselves through a combination of institutional restrictions on women's rights, conservative rhetoric, and selective implementation of formal anti-discrimination norms, but the specific mechanisms and degree of pressure vary.

In Belarus, anti-gender policy is primarily expressed through restrictions on women's reproductive rights, namely through complicating access to abortion.

An anonymous human rights defender from Belarus points out the consequences of introducing mandatory pre-abortion counseling:

"When it comes to abortion, every day can matter: a woman needs to ask for permission, she needs to get a referral. This simply increases the wait time, and, of course, then she simply loses her legal access to an abortion. Monitoring showed that, although by law or according to regulations, this counseling should be conducted by psychologists, sometimes it was conducted by people without psychological training, including representatives of religious organizations, who essentially simply discouraged women, intimidated them, talked about their sins, and so on".

The introduction of pre-abortion counseling is effectively used as a tool of reproductive pressure.

As the human rights activist notes, state policy demonstrates a selective moral logic when, on the one hand, IVF is not problematized and is supported by the state, including through subsidies, while, on the other hand, abortion is declared murder.

"In IVF, when we select the most viable embryos that will implant, it's not murder. That's the procedure. But abortion, of course, is murder. Well, that's a bit hypocritical. It simply shows that the state benefits. It used to be profitable to listen to human rights organizations and fight violence the way we proposed. Now it's profitable to listen to religious organizations and support some sometimes unscientific views about how an embryo in the third week of life looks like a miniature human, which is completely untrue".

The human rights activist sees another internal contradiction in Belarusian pro-natalist policy in the restrictions on the reproductive rights of HIV-positive women:

"On the one hand, go ahead and have children. On the other hand, a woman living with HIV who plans to give birth is often dissuaded and advised to have an abortion".

This highlights the double standards of Belarusian state policy, where pro-natalist rhetoric masks discriminatory practices.

Belarusian human rights activists confirm that the problem of gender-based and domestic violence is particularly acute in the country right now.

"At any level of violence or threat of violence, I have very little confidence that women feel safe right now".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

Human rights defender, Nasta Bazar notes that the overall increase in violence in the country, including police brutality, is impacting the situation with violence against women, while state arbitrary rule and repression deprive victims of violence of the opportunity to receive state protection:

"There are countless stories of women unable to go to the police in situations of domestic violence because men say, 'Well, then I'll show [them] your photo from 2020 <from the protests>' ... I'm equally terrified by the overall level of increased violence, which is why people generally believe that if the cops can do it, so can I".

In a situation where NGOs assisting survivors of gender-based violence have been forced out of the legal system, state-run assistance centers and shelters face significant restrictions. An anonymous human rights defender notes,

"Most of the assistance provided by state centers is not specialized. That is, it is provided to everyone – men and women – often in the same space. This means the state doesn't understand that violence has a gender dimension".

Furthermore, after the liquidation of NGOs, access to shelters for survivors of violence has become more limited and geographically restricted:

"Now assistance is provided based on your place of residence. You can't live in Brest and receive assistance in Grodno. You have to get it in Brest. When there were NGOs, you could go to that big shelter in Minsk and receive assistance there. Of course, the procedure wasn't so overly regulated. And access was easier, and you could receive assistance for longer. That's what's suffering right now".

Accessible sex education for teenagers in Belarus is virtually impossible, as it is subject to strict government control and restrictions: "Sex education, too, is now, according to the Ministry of Culture's decree Decree No. 18 of May 8, 2007, regulates the production and distribution of sex-educational materials, while Decree No. 24 strengthens control over their content, an activity requiring permission", while the term "sexual" is being discouraged as undesirable. Overall, the state discourages informing teenagers about sexual health, seeing it as a threat:

"They believe that talking to teenagers about sex will promote promiscuity and an increase in sexual debuts, although there is no direct correlation".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

In Georgia, anti-gender policy is more contradictory and fragmented, combining formally liberal norms with an increasingly conservative turn.

Despite Georgia's law on combating domestic violence, human rights activists note that the problem of gender-based violence remains acute. They say measures to combat domestic and gender-based violence are not effectively

implemented and do not address the existing problems.

Access to abortion remains legal in Georgia, but the state uses demographic rhetoric to impose additional barriers.

"There were several initiatives aimed at saving the nation, demography, and everything else. In 2023, amendments were made to the abortion law. They provided for additional counseling by a social worker and psychologist before an abortion. This was discussed in the context of ensuring access to psychologists, since abortion can also be traumatic for women, so in order to somehow help them, this was discussed. But it was introduced in a different way, in a way that creates obstacles for women who decide to have an abortion, because small clinics in the regions lack social workers and psychologists who could provide counseling, and this procedure creates obstacles to a quick and smooth abortion".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

At the same time, the problem of sex-selective abortions remains pressing in Georgia:

"Sex-selective abortions are also very common. Research shows that sex-selective abortions are especially popular for first-time mothers because everyone in Georgia wants their first child to be a boy".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

Sex education in Georgia is reduced to a minimalist program on "healthy lifestyles", which, according to human rights activists, *doesn't really cover anything on gender or LGBT+ issues*"(Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia), and sex education as such is essentially non-existent.

A particularly telling step in Georgia's anti-gender policy is the exclusion of the very concept of "gender" from legislation:

"In April 2025, amendments were made to the Law on Gender Equality. The amendments replaced the term 'gender' with the term 'equality between women and men' in all references in Georgian legislation. Thus, 'gender identity' as a protected ground was excluded from the anti-discrimination law".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

This could directly impact Georgian academia: although a master's program in gender studies formally exists, the discipline's future is uncertain, and student interest is low, since, as the Anonymous human rights defender notes, *"feminism, as well as sex education, are excluded from these school curricula"*.

In Kazakhstan, anti-gender policy is not expressed through direct restrictions, but rather through the rhetoric of *"traditional values"*.

The formal successes of the feminist movement in Kazakhstan, such as the domestic violence law and the repeal of the list of banned professions for women, as human rights defenders note, were only possible thanks to active human rights advocacy, not government initiative. On the other hand, these successes would not have been possible without the government's consent and recognition of the need for such measures:

"Any victories [of civil society] , as far as I've noticed, don't happen without the state, the government, agreeing to them. For example, this law [on domestic violence] was adopted at a time when the head of state was participating in a summit on gender equality, and the government announced the need to introduce such legislation, address issues of gender equality, and combat gender-based violence. I believe that the numerous cases brought to light by the 'Don't Be Silent' movement influenced this bill's eventual adoption. But, for example, if we're talking about repealing the list of professions banned for women, this decision was also made, in principle, thanks to the movement to change legislation on gender-based violence, to develop gender equality, thanks to the fact that the head of state, at the highest level, announced the need for this".

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

At the same time, as Zhanar Sekerbayeva notes, the domestic violence law itself isn't working because Kazakhstan lacks systematic work on addressing public attitudes:

"No, it's not working. Imagine, for example, that I'm a toxic man. How will I understand that toxic masculinity is not so good? Through the law? No! I'll never read the law. Why? I'm a toxic man. I'd say it's crap. Right? So they need to create a narrative and do something public. Very basic lectures, for example. ...So the government isn't doing the most important work that would accompany this law. Why aren't you talking about the very complex topic of beatings, conflicts, mental abuse, physical violence? No! They're asking people not to get divorced. That's our government's policy".

Zhanar emphasizes that legal measures are insufficient without new narratives and educational campaigns on violence and gender equality. Instead of taking the necessary comprehensive measures, the government is promoting traditionalist rhetoric, ignoring the root causes of violence, and negating all the benefits of the new law on violence.

According to Gulzada Serzhan, any rhetoric about the need to restrict access to abortions in Kazakhstan doesn't find widespread public support, as abortions have long been a common medical service thanks to the Soviet past, and religious factors aren't strong enough to change this situation:

"This rhetoric about abortion and so on isn't successful. They can't ban abortions because many women have abortions, so it's very popular, and it's difficult to stop women from having them. This rhetoric isn't very popular because religion isn't as influential here... This rhetoric can't influence the post-Soviet space, where abortions are part of women's health care. So, changing this situation isn't so easy".

Sex education faces active resistance from anti-gender movements and bureaucratic barriers: as Zhanar Sekerbaeva notes, even short educational lectures require a *"bureaucratic carousel"*:

"Sex education is generally not very welcome in schools. Because it requires asking permission from many people".

Furthermore, any mention of LGBT+ or gender issues in the context of adolescent education triggers moral panic. The Kazakh Academy maintains a limited space for gender courses, but unspoken censorship is possible: LGBT+ and feminist topics are often recommended to be *"softened"*.

Overall, all three countries are characterized by the use of traditional values rhetoric, the absence of a systemic and gender-sensitive approach to domestic violence, the marginalization of sexuality education, and limited space for gender studies in academia. Differences lie in the degree of institutional rigidity: Belarus demonstrates the most repressive and centralized model, while Georgia exhibits a contradictory combination of liberal (domestic violence law, signed Istanbul Convention) and conservative (restricted access to abortion, conservative rhetoric) approaches, with a complete rejection of the concept of *"gender"* in legislation. In Kazakhstan, measures to combat gender-based violence exist but have not yet been implemented, which is combined with the active promotion of conservative rhetoric.

Comparative characteristics of anti-gender policy

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Restriction of reproductive rights	Abortion is formally legal, but mandatory pre-abortion counseling has been introduced, creating barriers to access; the involvement of religious actors; pressure on HIV-positive women; and pronounced pro-natalist rhetoric.	Abortion is legal, but mandatory pre-abortion counseling has been introduced, creating barriers, especially in the regions; demographic rhetoric; the practice of sex-selective abortion persists.	Abortion is legal and widespread; attempts at restrictive rhetoric do not find widespread support; the religious factor is relatively weak; there are no recorded restrictions on access.
Domestic and gender-based violence	High levels of violence; rising amidst a general escalation of repression; limited access to protection; state-run centers without a gender-specific approach; liquidation of NGOs specializing in domestic violence.	A law against domestic violence exists, but implementation is weak.	The law on domestic violence was passed (under pressure from activists), but, according to human rights activists, it is not effective; systemic educational measures are lacking.
Access to specialized assistance (shelters, crisis centers)	NGOs are displaced; state centers provide non-specialized assistance; territorial restrictions on access.	Formally, mechanisms exist, but their effectiveness is limited; there is insufficient specialized support.	Formally, crisis mechanisms exist, but their effectiveness is limited; state support is declarative in nature.

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
The presence and work of feminist NGOs	Most NGOs have been liquidated or forced out of the legal field.	NGOs continue to operate, but under increasing pressure and a conservative agenda.	Active feminist initiatives influence legislation, but encounter resistance.
Access to sex education	Severe restrictions; permission to distribute materials is required; the term "sexual" is suppressed; the state considers sex education a threat.	There is a formal course on "healthy lifestyle", but no information on gender or LGBT+; comprehensive sex education is absent.	Sex education is discouraged; multiple permits are required; anti-gender movements actively resist; moral panic surrounds LGBT+ topics.
Anti-discrimination legislation	There is no anti-discrimination legislation; the Istanbul Convention has not been signed.	Formally, anti-discrimination legislation exists. The term "gender" was excluded from legislation (2025); gender identity is no longer a protected ground. The Istanbul Convention has been signed.	Legislation against violence exists; the creation of anti-discrimination legislation is under discussion; the Istanbul Convention has not been signed.
Academic freedom and gender studies	Significant curtailment of academic freedom; gender studies are marginalized.	The Master's program in Gender Studies formally exists; the program's future is uncertain; the removal of the term "gender" from legislation may impact educational programs.	Separate courses on gender are available; there is unspoken censorship of topics on LGBT+ and feminism

Key actors in anti-gender movements in three countries

The comparative map of anti-gender movement actors presented below is based on a preliminary survey of open data and a limited number of expert interviews with human rights defenders in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan. The study did not aim to comprehensively identify and describe all actors in the anti-gender field, but rather represented the first attempt to map this space based on available evidence.

Our results were uneven across all three countries. The more detailed analysis of the Kazakhstan case is not due to the greater significance of anti-gender mobilization in that country, but rather to the fact that among the respondents was a participant specifically researching anti-gender movements. Overall, this topic was more conceptualized in the expert community in Kazakhstan, which was reflected in the depth of description of the actors. Accordingly, differences in detail should not be interpreted as indicative of differences in the scale or intensity of anti-gender policy, but rather as a result of research limitations and the sample structure.

Human rights activists in all three countries encounter phenomena they readily conceptualize as anti-gender movements or anti-gender narratives. All respondents readily understood questions about anti-gender movements without further clarification, but their use of the term varied. Some actively used it in analytical and advocacy work, while others preferred to use narrower terms in line with their focus (for example, "anti-LGBT+").

For example, Belarusian human rights defender, Alisa Sarmant uses the term “anti-gender movement” less frequently, preferring to talk about anti-LGBT+ initiatives, as they are the most visible and operationalisable in the work of trans organizations.

Georgian human rights activists actively use the term “anti-gender movement” in their work, although they emphasize that it is not a unified collective identity, but an umbrella term. It encompasses disparate far-right and conservative groups united by their hostility toward LGBT+ rights. A significant emphasis is placed on violence: anti-gender actors are viewed not only as discursive opponents but also as groups directly involved in disrupting Pride events and carrying out physical attacks on human rights defenders and LGBT+ people, all while remaining unpunished.

Kazakhstani human rights activists emphasize that the anti-gender movement has been a long-standing and systematic topic, tracking its development since at least 2020, perceiving it as a threat and a tool used by the state for repressive purposes.

During the interviews, it became clear that informants understood the “anti-gender movement” as a broad, umbrella term encompassing both anti-LGBT+ and anti-feminist initiatives, as well as rhetoric about “traditional values” and “protecting children and families”. Even those experts who primarily use narrower categories (such as “anti-LGBT”) in their daily human rights work, in the interviews, viewed anti-gender mobilization as a structurally broader phenomenon, extending beyond an exclusively queer agenda. Differences concerned the operationalization of the term in professional practice rather than its conceptual understanding. Thus, even if the term “anti-gender movement” is not always or frequently used by human rights activists from different countries, the very logic of analyzing this phenomenon, monitoring anti-gender initiatives and narratives, and countering them is present in one way or another in the work of all the human rights activists with whom we spoke. Below is a map of the key actors in the anti-gender movement in each country.

Belarusian human rights defender, Nasta Bazar considers Alexander Lukashenko the central actor in anti-gender policy in Belarus, attributing to him a decisive and virtually monopolistic role in shaping the agenda. She describes anti-gender and anti-LGBT+ policies and rhetoric not as the result of a struggle between ideologies or other social

processes, but as a vertically transmitted political decision:

"...I still believe that he has the first and last word. If he says nothing, then... there are people on whom a lot depends, and they can convey their own message. But I think that in most situations, whatever he says, so it will be".

Anti-gender ideology is thus perceived as dependent on the will of one individual, rather than as an independent movement "from below" (this observation is also confirmed by the fact that almost none of the Belarusian human rights activists mentioned any grassroots anti-gender movements). Nasta Bazar emphasizes that a hypothetical change in Lukashenko's position would automatically alter the behavior of the entire system:

"If he had said 'let's not touch gays,' then no one would have dared touch gays".

Belarusian human rights activists also cited formal political actors: members of parliament and government representatives. At the level of public political rhetoric, Alisa Sarmant identifies Oleg Gaidukevich, a member of parliament and leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, as the key and most visible spokesperson:

"There are, for example, homophobic and transphobic members of parliament, like Oleg Gaidukevich, who is particularly vocal about LGBT+ issues and transgender issues. He regularly appears in public to comment on this topic. He talks about the 'harm of the West,' about alleged gender reassignment in schools, and promotes the idea that this shouldn't happen in Belarus".

Thus, Gaidukevich acts as an active re-broadcaster of anti-gender narratives, legitimizing them through his parliamentary status.

Furthermore, listing the key actors in the anti-gender movement, Alisa Sarmant mentioned Natalia Kochanova, Chairperson of the Council of the Republic:

"She actually advocated for the inclusion of marriage between men and women by birth in the National Security Concept".

In this description, she emerges as an actor seeking to enshrine anti-gender attitudes in legal norms.

Belarusian human rights activists also cited pro-government women's groups, such as the Belarusian Union of Women, as actors in the anti-gender movement. These organizations are described not as independent ideological associations, but as vehicles for state ideology:

"This [anti-gender] ideology has already become state ideology. They, first and foremost, are the bearers of state ideology. That is, if the state ideology changes tomorrow, [their rhetoric will change, too]. After all, there was a time when we didn't have such a strong anti-gender focus, and the Women's Union didn't promote it".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

A separate category consists of individual loyalist activists who operate through complaints and appeals to government agencies. The most prominent example (and the only one named by informants) is Olga Bondareva:

"She actively submits appeals to government agencies and regularly files complaints related to LGBT+ issues. She's generally the main informant".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

She is described as an extremely active grassroots actor in Belarus's repressive system.

Another player in the anti-gender movement in Belarus is the Orthodox Church:

"Orthodox religious organizations in Belarus are also actively promoting an anti-LGBT+ agenda among believers. They previously collected signatures for petitions banning so-called 'LGBT propaganda'. This rhetoric is constant: they call on the authorities to impose bans and restrictions. And when state propaganda releases such videos or materials, they often use references to the church and religious arguments".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

The Catholic Church in Belarus also does not support LGBT+ people, but the study participants refrained from commenting on this, as Catholics in Belarus are currently subject to political persecution.

State and quasi-state media outlets are key amplifiers and rebroadcasters of the anti-gender agenda, systematically raising this issue:

"One of the largest propaganda outlets in Belarus is Belarus Today, which is particularly active in promoting the anti-LGBT+ agenda. State television, including BT 1 and STV, also regularly airs similar stories. Regional state media outlets, such as Grodno Pravda, also publish such material".

Alisa Sarmant, TG-House, Belarus

The above-mentioned actors in the anti-gender movement in Belarus, according to informants, act not so much as independent agents, but rather as elements of a single system with significant influence from government structures, where key initiatives often come from above.

In Georgia, respondents directly identify the ruling party and state institutions as the key and most influential actors in the anti-gender agenda:

"We must acknowledge that the main anti-gender narratives are currently supported by the ruling party".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

Since 2023, anti-gender statements by political elites have become regular practice:

"Since 2023, the dissemination of anti-gender discourses by political figures has become practically the norm. Among them were representatives of legislative and executive authorities".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

Thus, anti-gender discourse in Georgia is being integrated into the official political mainstream, rather than being limited to radical fringe groups.

Human rights activists identified far-right movements as another important actor in the anti-gender movement in Georgia. The most stable and recognizable non-governmental actor in the anti-gender movement was the Alt-Info group:

"I mentioned Alt-Info because it's the most stable group, active for three or four years now. But before, we had smaller groups coordinated by the same people".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

According to human rights activists, the members of this group long disguised their pro-Russian orientation behind the rhetoric of "traditional" and "Georgian" values.

However, they later began openly demonstrating their alliance with Russia, visiting Moscow and posting photographs of themselves with the Kremlin in the background.

The Georgian Orthodox Church is seen as an important, albeit weakened, actor in the anti-gender field:

"We shouldn't forget about the Church, which is a bit weakened now... but it still remains the largest mobilizer of voters".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

The Church is not described as a generator of complex ideological narratives, but as a powerful symbolic relay:

"It's not that the Church creates these narratives, but that it merely reflects them".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

A key instrument of the Church's influence is the introduction of a new holiday, Family Purity Day, on May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia:

"Since 2014, Family Purity Day has been celebrated in Georgia on May 17, established by the Patriarch of Georgia and now legitimate under the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors. This entire process is heavily imbued with homophobia and transphobia".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

Through this symbolic calendar gesture, the LGBT+ community in Georgia is systematically framed as a threat to national traditions, family, and religion.

Pro-government television channels (such as Imedi) are among the most influential channels for disseminating anti-gender ideology. In recent years, Georgian human rights activists have observed that social media, primarily TikTok, but also Facebook, Telegram, and networks of bots and trolls operating in the comments, have become a key channel.

Thus, in Georgia, the anti-gender agenda is formed primarily from above, by the ruling party and state institutions, and is reinforced by a network of far-right and pro-Russian groups, church structures, and pro-government media.

In Kazakhstan, human rights activists also point to the state and its authorities as key

actors in the anti-gender movement:

"The government. I think it's the government. I think it's even the number one actor. Because I see how the government—this is also a practice from the Soviet Union — is trying, so to speak, to divide people".

Zhanar Sekerbayeva, Feminista, Kazakhstan

At the same time, independent activist Rakhat Sadykov emphasizes that the state, at the level of documents and commitments, is forced to support progressive norms:

"After all, our state, citing internationally ratified agreements, is trying... to prevent suicides among adolescents and combat bullying. Truly good norms are being adopted".

However, at the same time, the state is described as a key hidden beneficiary and moderator of anti-gender mobilization. Anti-gender actors are used as a tool to justify repressive norms:

"We propose good initiatives, but then suddenly, in quotes, 'the people are against it.' The people don't want it, and sometimes these initiatives are being rolled back".

Thus, the state does not necessarily publicly promote anti-gender ideology, but creates conditions in which such movements become a "convenient voice of the people".

All respondents identify the Republican Public Association "Kazakhstan Union of Parents" as the central and most prominent player in the anti-gender movement. The organization is described as large and well-organized, with branches all over the country and operating on a franchise principle:

"It's like a republican association with branches... they've started to sprout up in different cities".

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

It combines several agendas:

"It's a homophobic organization, it's an anti-vaxxer organization, it's an anti-psychological organization — basically, every 'anti-anti-anti' you can muster".

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

The movement's origins are directly linked to the anti-vaccine mobilization during COVID-19 in 2020-2021. The state's unequal treatment of this organization compared to human rights NGOs is also noted, indicating de facto institutional support:

"And this is some kind of support from local and national authorities. I observe this support all the time, everywhere, in all regions, towards all representatives of this organization. It manifests itself, for example, in support of peaceful assemblies. If we draw a parallel with the feminist initiative 'Feminita', no matter how many applications they submit for peaceful assemblies, they are constantly rejected. They have to submit more than 15 applications in just one day, and they're constantly getting rejected. The Republican Public Association 'Kazakhstan Union of Parents' applied once in 2022 and received permission immediately. They held this rally".

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

Socially vulnerable women with difficult backgrounds who rely on state benefits are often among parental initiative activists. Gulzada Serzhan directly points to the role of security forces in their mobilization:

"These women don't have a good education. And they were recruited by the National Security Committee to become part of this anti-gender movement. I don't think these women realize they're being manipulated. All they want are social benefits from the budget. They receive a small amount of money for each child, but if you have seven children, that amount is multiplied by seven, giving you a monthly salary. And these women, because of this socialization, think they're indebted to the government. And then the National Security Committee exploits these women, saying, 'We're giving it to you, don't you want it? If you don't want it, we'll take away your social benefits. You have to go and do everything' they say, and that's why these women attack us".

The anti-gender field also includes marginal but active groups, often with external ties. These include anti-vaxxer and conspiracy theorists, such as "Unity of the Conscious":

"They have a theory that the state is a corporation... they teach people advocacy, how to write petitions".

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

This also includes Scientology structures masquerading as human rights NGOs:

"They have an NGO called the Human Rights Center... they are against mental health professionals and against LGBT+."

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

Transnational sources of ideology and funding are noted:

"Often it comes from the States, takes root in Russia, and then spreads".

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, religious actors, primarily representatives of Islam, play a notable, yet limited and fragmented role. However, participants emphasize that religious structures do not actively lobby. Support often comes from individual mullahs and imams rather than official organizations.

Taken together, all of this creates a flexible and situational anti-gender system in Kazakhstan, closely integrated into the logic of authoritarian governance and managed social conflicts.

Overall, in all three countries, the anti-gender agenda is shaped by the state's key role and is closely linked to the logic of political control. However, the degree of centralization and the form of this role vary significantly. In Belarus, anti-gender policy is highly vertical and essentially boils down to the will of a single political actor. In Georgia, it is embedded in the party-state mainstream and is reinforced by street violence by the far-right and the symbolic influence of the church. In Kazakhstan, it takes a hybrid form, where the state acts less as an overt ideological leader than as a hidden moderator and beneficiary of grassroots mobilization.

The key difference between the countries lies in the configuration of non-state actors: while in Belarus they primarily broadcast the state agenda, in Georgia and especially Kazakhstan, the anti-gender landscape is more fragmented and includes stable quasi-civil structures (far-right groups, "parental" movements) that create the effect of public demand. However, the similarity lies in the fact that in all three contexts, anti-gender narratives are used as a tool to legitimize repressive practices and restrictions on the rights of women and LGBT+ people, regardless of how they are framed.

Comparative table of antigen actors in three countries

Actor category	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
State actors (political leadership, government institutions)	Alexander Lukashenko (the central actor setting the agenda); deputies; public politicians: Oleg Gaidukevich; Natalia Kochanova.	The ruling party "Georgian Dream"; representatives of the legislative and executive branches.	Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan; state institutions; law enforcement agencies (including the National Security Committee).
Pro-government and quasi-governmental NGOs/associations	Belarusian Union of Women.	No (no directly pro-government NGOs were named in the interview).	Kazakhstan Union of Parents (a large national network).
Independent/quasi-civil movements and groups	Individual loyalist activists (e.g., Olga Bondareva).	Far-right movements; the largest and most stable – Alt-Info.	Anti-vaxxer and conspiracy movements (e.g., Unity of the Conscious); Scientology structures (Center for Human Rights).
Religious actors	Belarusian Orthodox Church; Catholic Church (mentioned without details).	Georgian Orthodox Church (symbolic mobilizer).	Individual mullahs and imams (without any explicit institutional campaign, according to informants). At the same time, the chief imam and representatives of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan made corresponding statements.

Actor category	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Media and distribution channels	State media: Belarus Today; BT-1 and STV TV channels; regional state media.	Pro-government TV channels (e.g., Imedi); social media groups and channels (TikTok, Facebook, Telegram), bot networks.	Social networks; parental public pages; mobilization through authorized rallies.
Transnational connections	Borrowings from Russian anti-gender rhetoric and agenda.	Pro-Russian orientation of some members of the far right (visits to Moscow).	Ideological borrowings from the USA and Russia.

Anti-gender narratives in three countries

1. Belarus

The protection of traditional values as a state mission

One of the central themes of anti-gender discourse is the assertion that the Belarusian state supposedly:

"Strictly defends traditional values, LGBT+ won't get through, everything is fine".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

This rhetoric is used to demonstrate control and stability, as well as to symbolically "pacify" society.

At the same time, human rights activists emphasize the inherent contradiction of this narrative: LGBT+ people are simultaneously declared a vanishingly small, insignificant group and subject to constant legislative and repressive pressure:

"They constantly claim that there are supposedly almost no LGBT+ people in the country, that they are a 'minuscule' number, and that everyone has already left. Yet, at the same time, they continue to pass decrees and laws, tightening procedures, including access to gender-affirmative procedures. It's a clear contradiction: on the one hand, they claim the problem doesn't exist, while on the other, they constantly tighten the reins and escalate the issue".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

As an example of such a narrative, we can cite the words of Oleg Gaidukevich:

"In fact, my question is very serious; it concerns traditional values. And although the head of state answered humorously, his answer was very serious and clear to me. I heard what was most important to me: the propaganda of non-traditional values, of that which destroys our family and our foundations, will not happen in Belarus, and I don't need more. I saw the clear position of the head of state"⁷⁰.

The key framework here is the notion that the state is obligated to actively protect "traditional values", and that any "non-traditional" ones are inherently destructive and dangerous. This statement is constructed not as an independent position, but as a public affirmation of loyalty to the head of state, with Alexander Lukashenko acting as the guarantor of the protection of these "traditional values". Moreover, these values are not discussed, defined, or problematized; instead, they are presented as self-evident norms that require no argumentation. This is an example of normative, protective discourse, in which the state acts as the protector of morality and tradition.

The image of the "enemy"

Human rights activists describe anti-gender rhetoric as a tool for creating an artificial enemy in the absence of a positive national idea or project for the future:

"You just need to create an enemy, and that enemy has already been created. Of course, people unite around the enemy because there is no other positive agenda. That is, there is no agenda of leading Belarus to some kind of future, other than some declarations. There is no clearly defined national idea. The national idea is to fight enemies. Naturally, LGBT+ people are very clear enemies, immigrants are clear enemies. That is, all people who are different from Belarusians. They are enemies for various reasons, and that is why society unites around this. Not around a positive idea, but around this fight against enemies".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

⁷⁰ Sputnik Belarus. (2023, April 4). Gaidukevich on LGBT: I saw a clear position from the head of state. <https://sputnik.by/20230404/gaydukevich-ob-lgbt-ya-uvidel-chetkuyu-pozitsiyu-glavy-gosudarstva-1073983214.html>

This narrative serves to affectively unite society around a threat and works to create moral panics.

An example of this narrative is Andrey Mukovozchik's comment regarding the first same-sex marriage registered in Lithuania:

"I'd rather lie down in a coffin in Gomel and lie there until God once again unleashes his righteous wrath on Sodom and Gomorrah. On the sodomite Latvian president and the entire Vilnius Regional Court, along with the mayor of Vilnius – damn them all. After all, what's a civil registry office, girls? It's a civil registry office. And what kind of civil status can those who register as a same-sex couple have? A homosexual, a border state, or an imbecile? In any case, he's hit on the head. Well, then he shouldn't go to the registry office, but to the hospital. First, get treatment, and then everything else. Or straight to Gomel, to a coffin. Lie there. See if a homosexual is hard to cure. Or maybe just don't get up at all"⁷¹.

This example of a radicalized form of anti-gender discourse represents the ultimate demonization of LGBT+ people. The flour carrier resorts to dehumanizing and pathologizing LGBT+ people. References to Sodom and Gomorrah serve as religious justification for hate speech and calls to violence. LGBT+ people are portrayed here as enemies of society and God, unworthy of life and compassion.

In general, the image of an enemy or enemy ideology is closely intertwined with other types of anti-gender narratives. For example, in this quote from Alexander Lukashenko, one can see that Belarusian society and the state are being targeted "in an enemy attack":

"They are imposing on us obviously destructive ideas, ideas of permissiveness, consumerism, childlessness, LGBT, and others, which are devastating to society and the state"⁷².

71 STV (September 15, 2025). "Terminally ill" – Mukovozchik commented on the first same-sex marriage in Lithuania. <https://ctv.by/news/obshestvo/neizlechimo-bolny-mukovozchik-prokommentiroval-pervyj-odnopolnyj-brak-v-litve>
72 Reform.news (2024, March 14). Lukashenko: The Church's Job Is to Set Moral Guidelines, Not Engage in Politics <https://reform.news/lukashenko-delo-cerkvi-zadavat-nravstvennye-orientiry-a-ne-zanimatsja-politikoj>

Child protection

A separate, persistent theme is the appeal to the protection of children and the country's demographic situation. LGBT+ people and ideas of LGBT+ rights or gender equality are portrayed as dangerous for future generations:

"Look, we've found an enemy who will spoil our children, help the state. In this sense, of course, the state is trying to mobilize citizens to unite around it".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

At the same time, human rights activists emphasize that topics such as the fight against childfree or "propaganda of childlessness" had no real social basis in Belarus, but were deliberately constructed:

"The problem of childlessness or childfree is absolutely far-fetched, because we have never had groups in Belarus that would advocate for this".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

In this quote by Grigory Azarenok, children and their consciousness are depicted as a battlefield in a supposedly ongoing information war:

"In an era when Western civilization is bursting at the seams, children are becoming the first target. Their immature minds are being turned into weapons of information warfare, shaping entire generations of moral cripples with machine guns of hatred in their hands".

He further writes:

"In the US and EU, children's content is being transformed into a tool for ideological indoctrination. Disney is increasing the proportion of LGBT characters to 50% and banning the use of gender-specific references: now it's not 'boys and girls', but 'dreamers and friends'"⁷³.

Azarenok contrasts parenting methods in Belarus and Western countries, demonstrating that Belarus is seen as a space for "normal" and morally correct upbringing, while the West is constructed as a source of deliberate and aggressive distortion of children's consciousness and gender norms.

⁷³ Azarenok. STV. Belarus. (2025, August 31). *Battle for the Future: Parenting with Love or Hate?* <https://t.me/AzarenokCTV>

The Western threat and ideological confrontation

Anti-gender rhetoric is integrated into a broader geopolitical narrative of confrontation with the West. LGBT+ rights are portrayed as an alien, imposed ideology:

"In official rhetoric, LGBT is presented as a threat and as some kind of 'Western ideology,' as a tool for reducing birth rates. All of this fits into the overall ideological narrative of a supposedly massive attack by the West on traditional values, which the state must resist".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

This narrative serves to justify repressive measures and legitimize the rejection of international obligations:

"They're withdrawing from conventions together, Russia and Belarus. So they're promoting this narrative: we're against a bipolar world, let's make it multipolar. And this is all under the guise of a struggle, a pseudo-struggle against colonialism. 'Don't meddle in our affairs, and we won't meddle in yours'".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

It's important to note that anti-gender discourse disguises itself as anti-colonialist.

Grigory Azarenok writes on his Telegram channel:

"Western civilization isn't just in crisis. It's in its death throes. Traditional values are being replaced by artificial standards, eroding the very concepts of family, gender, and national identity"⁷⁴.

Here, the author portrays the West as civilizationally insolvent, in existential crisis and decline. The dichotomy is implied: the West's "artificial standards" versus the "natural order" and "traditional values" defended by Belarus (and Russia).

The Belarusian Union of Women's Telegram channel published a post titled *"More and more EU residents, tired of what's happening in their countries, want to move to Belarus*

74 Azarenok. STV. Belarus. (2025, August 31). *Battle for the Future: Parenting with Love or Hate?* <https://t.me/AzarenokCTV>

and Russia”⁷⁵. This narrative echoes the Russian one broadcast by pro-government media⁷⁶: Russia and Belarus are the last bastion for those who support “traditional values”, while the EU supposedly destroys families and promotes “perverted morality”. The post reinforces the anti-Western trope, presenting migration from Europe to Russia and Belarus as a “return to harmony” and salvation from the “LGBT agenda”:

“As the chair of the BUW, I received a letter from a Lithuanian family. They have four children, the youngest is nine months old. The woman writes: ‘We are simply tired of everything that’s happening here. I can’t send my children to a school where the LGBT agenda is all over the place. We packed our things, sold our house, and moved to Belarus’”.

The family’s personal history serves as empirical evidence of the decline of the West: people who disagree with the inclusive policies of European countries are forced to leave their homes and flee.

Loyalty to Russia

Human rights activists emphasize that anti-LGBT+ rhetoric in Belarus is closely linked to a pro-Russian orientation and the expectations of the pro-government electorate:

“As a rule, people who support Lukashenko also support the Russian political regime. He tries to keep up with this ideological trend and operates according to a similar logic”.

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Anti-gender policies are becoming a way to demonstrate ideological alignment with Russia and strengthen the regime’s position:

“For the Lukashenko regime, promoting state policy and demonstrating its anti-LGBT stance are undoubtedly important. This is part of a public commitment to the so-called protection of traditional values. This largely explains the adoption of such decisions and measures—as a way to demonstrate ideological commitment and political loyalty to its eastern neighbor”.

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

75 Белорусский союз женщин. (2023, 30 сентября). Все больше жителей Евросоюза, уставших от того, что происходит в их странах, хотят переехать в Беларусь и Россию. <https://t.me/oobsqby/32126>

76 АСС. (2025, 19 августа). «Мне нравится направление, в котором движется Россия». Зачем иностранцы едут в нашу страну. <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/24818585>

Thus, Natalia Kochanova, speaking about cooperation between Russia and Belarus, emphasized the importance of jointly defending traditional values:

*"The most important thing is people with their normal traditional values – both in Russia and in Belarus, since time immemorial"*⁷⁷.

In other words, she pointed out that Russia and Belarus constitute a single moral space. This is not simply a statement of the two countries' similarities, but an affirmation of a common civilizational position in the supposed ideological confrontation with the West.

According to human rights activists, anti-gender narratives in Belarus are not a response to real social processes. They are a tool for ideological mobilization, legitimization of repression, and consolidation of the authoritarian regime, embedded in a broader discourse of "traditional values", external threats, and the fight against "enemies". The distinction between narrative types is very tentative here: one can see how different themes (child protection, traditional values, anti-Western rhetoric) are closely intertwined.

2. Georgia

Anti-Western and anti-European narrative

Anti-gender rhetoric in Georgia is closely intertwined with anti-European discourse, where European integration is presented as a threat to cultural, national, and gender identity. The EU is portrayed not as a source of economic security and development, but as a bearer of "destructive values":

"Integration into the European Union has always been viewed by these groups as a negative aspect. It was often said, for example, that the EU was pressuring Georgia to legalize same-sex marriage. And, in a sense, the underlying architecture of this anti-gender rhetoric in Georgia was the formation of a narrative of cultural protectionism against Western liberalism".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

As an example of an anti-European narrative, consider the call by United Neutral Georgia for a plebiscite on the country's accession to the European Union:

⁷⁷ Позірк. (2024, 22 июля). Кочанова назвала представителей ЛГБТ людьми с отклонениями. <https://pozirk.online/ru/news/96944/>

"The government's persistent rhetoric that it will ensure Georgia's readiness to join the European Union by 2030 is unacceptable and already dangerous. We ask a simple question: does the Georgian public even want to join an association whose main demands are the legalization of same-sex marriage, the promotion of LGBT propaganda, the cession of sovereignty, and the erasure of Georgian identity?"⁷⁸.

From a discursive analysis perspective, this statement demonstrates how the anti-gender narrative in Georgia reduces European integration to LGBT+ issues, links human rights with the loss of sovereignty, constructs national identity as vulnerable and in need of protection, and translates political choice into the realm of existential fear.

LGBT+ as a threat to national identity

In Georgia's anti-gender discourse, the LGBT+ community is constructed as a threat to the survival and preservation of the nation. Here, one can also speak of "traditional values" as an important element of the Georgian anti-gender narrative. According to human rights activists, Georgian anti-gender movement actors primarily understand these values as family.

Topics that have never been a priority for the Georgian LGBT+ movement are being exploited to create moral panic. For example, same-sex marriage is being exaggerated into a "national catastrophe":

"The time will come when Georgian men will marry Georgian men, and that will be a catastrophe. It contradicts our traditional values".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

The activist highlights the gap between the community's actual demands and how they are presented in public discourse:

"The local community never demanded the legalization of same-sex marriage... The main issues were access to education, access to healthcare".

Georgian politicians' narratives equate the recognition of LGBT+ rights with the erasure of identity (both Georgian

78 Netgazeti. (2025, August 13). „ნეიტრალური საქართველო“ EU-ში გაწევრიანების საწინააღმდეგოდ პლემბისციტის ჩატარებას ითხოვს. <https://netgazeti.ge/news/782631/>

and European). For example, Irakli Kobakhidze stated:

*"Europe has completely lost its identity. The statistics are alarming: in the European Union, the rate of same-sex marriages among the younger generation has already exceeded 20%. This is the result of propaganda. We are protecting Georgian society from this propaganda. The risks are serious"*⁷⁹.

In this narrative, LGBT+ rights are not viewed as an element of human rights or civil equality, but rather as a tool of ideological "propaganda" leading to the degradation and disappearance of cultural identity. Thus, the anti-gender narrative is built not only on the opposition between Georgia and the West, but also on a more complex construct, where LGBT+ rights become a marker of the loss of identity altogether.

Protection of families and children

The central elements of anti-gender ideology are family and children, allegedly threatened by LGBT+ people:

"And this is also the core idea of this entire family law on the protection of family values and minors. The law portrays the LGBT+ community as a threat to families and children".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

Human rights activists describe how the logic of "child protection" is used to censor education, art, media, and even direct communication:

"Information regarding sexual and gender diversity... is prohibited in the media, in art, in advertising... Even direct communication... by minors is not allowed".

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

Eka Tsereteli highlights how the ruling Georgian Dream party is adapting American anti-gender and transphobic narratives, particularly those related to fears for children:

"They allegedly wanted our children to change their gender at an early age. This was largely copied from the US. And one of the main themes of Georgian Dream last year

⁷⁹ Echo of the Caucasus. (2025, August 4). Back to the mountains and no same-sex marriage. <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/nazad-v-gory-i-bez-odnopolih-brakov/33494232.html>

was... Well, it was very transphobic. That they forced our men to change their gender and have children, something like that. Now Georgian Dream is heavily gravitating toward these themes, copying <American> narratives".

The human rights activist accurately notes the copying: Georgian narratives about "forcing men to change their gender and have children" mirror American fears about "men in women's sports" or "propaganda in schools". This demonstrates the process of transfer of ideas from Trump and the American right to Georgia and the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia as a whole.

Thus, Shalva Papuashvili's remarks about Western "LGBT ideology" reveal a desire to shield children, school-children, and students from it first and foremost:

"Brussels tells us to follow a false ideology and say that a man can become a woman – that's what it's really about, but our law says that a man cannot become a woman, and a woman cannot become a man. That false ideology cannot be used to brainwash kindergartens, schools, and universities, and so on. It would be the same as if Brussels demanded that we admit that the Earth is flat"⁸⁰.

This passage frames LGBT+ issues as a direct threat to the younger generation, emphasizing the need to protect children from "brainwashing" in educational institutions. The comparison with a "flat Earth" reinforces the rhetoric of the absurd, positioning gender rights not simply as a mistake but as anti-scientific dogmatism. Thus, the protection of children becomes a central motif of anti-gender discourse, where the educational sphere appears as an arena of ideological struggle.

Overall, anti-gender narratives in Georgia form a coherent ideological framework in which LGBT+ rights are consistently constructed as an existential threat – to national identity, sovereignty, family, and the country's future. In this discourse, European integration is reduced to a "gender agenda" and presented not as a source of security and development, but as the imposition of alien values and the loss of selfhood. The LGBT+ community is symbolically used as a universal "enemy" through which broader fears – of the West, social change, and political instability – are articulated.

80 Эхо Кавказа. (2025, 17 июля). Грузинская мечта поспорила об экзистенциальном. <https://www.ekhokavkaza.com/a/gruzinskaya-mechta-posporila-ob-ekzistentsialnom/33476930.html>

The rhetoric of protecting families and children takes center stage, legitimizing censorship, restrictive laws, and repressive policies, while the actual demands of the LGBT+ community are deliberately distorted or ignored. As a result, anti-gender discourse in Georgia is not a marginal phenomenon, but an important tool for political mobilization and the legitimization of the current political course.

3. Kazakhstan

Child protection

One of the central themes of anti-gender discourse in Kazakhstan is the appeal to child protection and demographic security. Human rights activists emphasize that this narrative is built primarily on emotional appeal rather than rational argumentation. Anti-gender actors deliberately exploit parental fears, using images of threats to children to “turn off critical thinking”:

“There’s a lot of emotional clamor about something happening to your children, and it’s as if people’s critical thinking is turned off because they have these natural instincts to protect their children”.

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

In a more generalized form, this fear is articulated as a threat to childbearing and “extinction,” where gender equality, LGBT+ rights, and feminism are presented as factors in the demographic crisis:

“For the most part, it’s about the threat to the birth rate”.

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

Thus, the anti-gender narrative constructs a moral panic around the future of the nation, reducing complex social processes to the binary logic of “traditional family = survival”, “LGBT+ and gender rights = threat to children and the future”.

On the Telegram channel of the Kazakhstan Union of Parents, one can find a post in support of the law banning “LGBT propaganda” with the following words:

“It is unacceptable to turn a blind eye to the uncontrolled dissemination of information that can harm the health, moral, and spiritual

development of the younger generation”⁸¹.

The text reproduces the narrative of threats to minors documented by human rights activists, which is used as the main tool for legitimizing anti-gender and anti-LGBT+ initiatives. This utilizes emotional mobilization through fear for children, which automatically dismisses any alternative positions as unacceptable. Importantly, the “harm” is not specified in the text; it exists as an abstract threat.

Traditional Values

Human rights activists note that, despite the fact that the rhetoric of “traditional values” is actively used by anti-gender actors in Kazakhstan, they offer virtually no positive definition of the concept. Instead, they describe it through the denial of human rights, LGBT+ rights, and the feminist agenda:

It seems to me that they don’t even really define traditional values. They simply champion them. They tend to define precisely what doesn’t correspond to traditional values. That is, they cite the Istanbul Convention and international agreements more often. They cite and say that they don’t agree with this at all and are against it all”.

Rakhmat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

Kazakh human rights activists emphasize that, in the Kazakh context, the concept of “traditional values” is completely divorced from Kazakhstan’s actual history, existing traditions, and colonial past. The activists point out that true “traditionality” in a nomadic context would mean rejecting the sedentary state, the industrial economy, and the colonial legacy:

“When you want to restore traditional values to Kazakh society, you must remember that Kazakhs were nomads. ... And we lost our traditional way of life. Moreover, our 20th-century history is a genocide of the Kazakhs. Our land was taken away, and many people from other places, political prisoners, were deported to Kazakhstan. And this entire mixed population was forcibly deported. ... So, if we want to restore our traditions, does that mean we

81 The Kazakhstan Parents’ Union channel (July 31, 2024). Tomorrow is the public discussion of the petition against LGBT propaganda. https://t.me/Qaz_ata_analar_odagy/2800

have to get rid of all these cities? Because all these cities were built by colonizers who expelled us from this land and then built their houses”.

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

In this sense, “traditional values” are seen as a manipulative tool for dismantling human rights:

“Is this your traditional value? What historical part are you talking about? You must be clear when you talk about traditional values; please define which historical part you are presenting to me as tradition. For example, if you are talking about a certain historical period, which one exactly? Traditions of the 15th century, the 17th century, the 20th century, or modern ones? Which traditions are you talking about? So it’s all nonsense, all manipulation to get rid of human rights”.

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

The following statement about “traditional values” can be found on the Telegram channel of the Kazakhstan Union of Parents:

“In Kazakhstani society, the traditional family, chastity, respect for the roles of mother and father, and the union of man and woman are considered fundamental. The law merely codifies this position so that children are not subjected to the pressure of information trends that could distort their perceptions of what is normal”⁸².

The text begins with an assertion of a supposed social consensus. Moreover, this statement is not supported by any empirical evidence, but is presented as a self-evident fact. This technique is typical of anti-gender discourse: “traditional values” are presented not as a subject of debate or a historically fluid category, but as something inherently given and uniform across society. This completely ignores the heterogeneous nature of Kazakhstani society, as discussed by human rights activists. “Society” in the text is presented as homogeneous and devoid of internal differences.

The West in Kazakhstan’s anti-gender narratives

Unlike Belarus, Georgia, and Russia, human rights

82 Channel of the Kazakhstan Union of Parents (2025, December 21). *It’s important to understand: the line is drawn in relation to children.* https://t.me/Qaz_ata_analar_odagy/3778

activists say the Kazakh authorities don't project a pronounced anti-Western stance. The government maintains a pragmatic, multi-vector foreign policy and avoids overtly constructing the image of an "external enemy":

"I don't see any [anti-Western rhetoric]. It's more about good neighborliness, economic benefits, and investment development. Anti-Western rhetoric can be heard from individuals or on social media. Members of parliament may talk about some destructive foreign funding, but they don't say that Western countries specifically want to harm our country".

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

A key element of the anti-gender discourse is the symbolic reliance on Donald Trump, his rhetoric, and policies as "proof" that even the US has supposedly "realized the fallacy" of the liberal agenda:

"These constant citations, this message that, look, even America has realized, even America has figured out where the truth lies. This constant praise for Trump, not only from the anti-gender movement, but even from members of our Majilis, the lower house of Parliament. There was a particularly bold statement by MP Edil Zhanbyrshin. This is probably the most well-known one right now."

Rakhat Sadykov, independent activist, Kazakhstan

Thus, Kazakhstani anti-gender narratives contain fragmented borrowings not only from Russian but also from American conservative discourse.

MP Edil Zhanbyrshin stated the following:

"The 47th President of the United States, Donald Trump, has cemented the fact that there are now only two genders in his country. Only male and female. This is in a country that has strived throughout the world to establish liberal values, protect human rights, and establish civil society. <...> In this regard, we send greetings from 'Uncle Donald' to all gays!"⁸³.

The MP uses Trump as a symbolic authority designed to legitimize the anti-gender agenda within Kazakhstan. His figure

83 Vlast.kz. (2025, January 22). Deputy Zhanbyrshin demands a review of the petition banning LGBT propaganda. <https://vlast.kz/novosti/63550-deputat-zanbyrsin-trebuot-peresmotret-resenie-po-peticii-o-zaprete-propagandy-lgbt.html>

serves as “proof” that the rejection of gender diversity is not a marginal position, but supposedly a new global trend emanating from the very center of the liberal world. Another tactic is to invert the image of the West: it ceases to be a promoter of human rights and becomes a mirror in which anti-gender actors seek confirmation of their own position. This allows them to deflect accusations of archaism or “backwardness”, while right-wing rhetoric is presented as a new global trend.

It’s interesting to see how the Kazakhstan Union of Parents reacted to the deputy’s words. Echoing Zhanbyrshin’s words, the author of the post adds:

“Our officials are so eager to emulate the West. Will they take up the initiative in this matter?”⁸⁴.

This demonstrates the anti-gender movement’s ambivalent attitude toward both the West and the government. Therefore, it’s impossible to say that the positions of the Parents’ Movement and the Kazakh authorities are entirely aligned.

Overall, anti-gender narratives in Kazakhstan represent a hybrid construct, combining emotional mobilization through fear for children, vague appeals to “traditional values”, borrowings from Russian and American right-wing rhetoric, and gradual institutionalization at the legislative level. At the same time, they are weakly rooted in actual Kazakh cultural history and ignore the colonial context.

In conclusion, it can be noted that anti-gender narratives in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan exhibit significant similarities in their basic frameworks and rhetorical devices. In all three countries, LGBT+ people and gender equality are constructed not as a human rights issue, but as an existential threat to families, children, demography, and the future of a nation. The central unifying motif is the rhetoric of “child protection”, which is used for emotional mobilization, the legitimization of censorship and restrictive measures, and the removal of anti-gender policies beyond the realm of rational debate. The concept of “traditional values” is presented in all cases as self-evident and universal, yet it is almost never given a positive and historically grounded definition in each specific context.

84 The Kazakhstan Union of Parents channel (December 22, 2025). Deputy Zhanbyrshin again raised the issue of banning LGBT propaganda. https://t.me/Qaz_ata_analar_odagy/3181

Instead, it is constructed through the denial of LGBT+ rights, the feminist agenda, and liberal norms. Thus, anti-gender discourse in all three contexts functions as an instrument of moral panic and political mobilization, rather than as a response to real social demands or transformations.

At the same time, there are fundamental differences between the countries related to their political regimes, foreign policy orientations, and the degree of institutionalization of the anti-gender agenda. In Belarus, anti-gender narratives are most firmly embedded in the authoritarian state ideology, closely intertwined with demonstrations of loyalty to Russia and an openly anti-Western, pseudo-anti-colonialist discourse. Here, LGBT+ people are consistently used as the image of an internal and external enemy. In Georgia, anti-gender rhetoric is centered around an anti-European and anti-liberal narrative, where the recognition of any LGBT+ rights is reduced to a sign of the loss of sovereignty and national identity, and the topic itself becomes a tool in the political struggle around European integration. The Kazakh context, in turn, is distinguished by greater hybridity: the state avoids direct confrontation with the West, anti-gender narratives are formed through borrowings from Russian and American right-wing discourse and do not always fully align with the official government line. As a result, the anti-gender agenda in all three countries performs similar functions, but is implemented through different ideological configurations that reflect the specifics of each political context.

Comparative characteristics of anti-gender narratives

Narrative type	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Child protection	The central motif: children as "targets of information warfare"; legitimization of censorship and repression.	The central element is the prohibition of «propaganda» in education and media; the protection of minors as the basis of the law.	One of the main plots; emotional mobilization through fear for children; legitimization of the ban on "propaganda".
Population threat/extinction	The connection between LGBT+ and childlessness and the "destruction of the family".	Implicitly through "national catastrophe" and the disappearance of identity.	Direct articulation of the threat of birth rate and "extinction".
"Traditional values" as a self-evident norm	The state mission is to protect "traditional values"; the president acts as the guarantor of their protection; they are presented as a given; they are linked to the family.	Associated primarily with family and national identity.	The rhetoric is actively used, but without a clear definition; it is criticized by human rights activists as historically untenable and colonial.
The image of the internal enemy	Clearly expressed; LGBT+ as a convenient, "understandable" enemy.	Used as a symbol of "decay" and loss of identity.	Present, but less operationalized.
Anti-Western narrative	Strong, systemic; the West as a source of "destructive ideology".	Narratives against European integration; the EU as a threat to identity.	The state level is weak; individual actors use anti-Western motives.

Narrative type	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
Loyalty to Russia/ Russia-oriented	Integrated into the state ideology; demonstration of synchronization of legal norms.	Indirectly (through anti-liberal discourse), but not centrally.	Borrowings from Russian discourse, but without official full synchronization.
Borrowing American right-wing discourse	Indirectly through the general conservative trend.	Direct copying of transphobic narratives and child protection narratives.	Direct appeal to Donald Trump as a symbolic authority (from individual members of parliament).
LGBT+ as a "Western ideology"	Yes, systematically.	Yes, in conjunction with the EU.	Partially, but without an official government line.
Connection with the authoritarian consolidation of the regime	Direct and systemic.	Associated with political struggle and mobilization around the ruling party.	Partially; the anti-gender agenda does not fully coincide with the state line.

Russia's influence

In Belarus, human rights activists describe Russia's influence on anti-gender state policy and circulating narratives as direct, systemic, and virtually total. It manifests itself both at the ideological level and in specific legal and administrative practices.

Alisa Sarmant summarizes:

"The influence is very strong: the traditionalist agenda promoted by Russia directly determines the decisions and rhetoric of the Belarusian authorities regarding LGBT+ people".

Another human rights defender, speaking anonymously, notes:

"This is direct influence, direct and targeted, designed to keep Belarus under Russia's influence in all respects".

Anti-gender rhetoric and policies in Belarus replicate Russian templates almost verbatim:

"The copying here is obvious. Speaking in their language – 'pedophilia', 'childlessness', and other accusatory cliches – it's a direct copy of Russian narratives. Legislative initiatives, fines, prosecutions – all follow the same pattern and look very similar. The same logic applies to gender-affirmative procedures".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Even with the formal preservation of the gender-affirmative procedure, as human rights activists note, in practice it is becoming difficult to access, precisely at the same time as the ban on legal gender recognition and gender-affirmative procedures in Russia.

The role of Russian media influence is emphasized:

"This is one of the few countries in the former Soviet Union or Eastern Partnership where we have so many Russian channels. In Moldova, you won't find so many Russian channels anymore. They're simply banned or require a subscription. They're definitely banned now. It's the same in Ukraine. There are restrictions. We simply have 80% or 70% of Belarusian state and commercial semi-state television channels that are Russian products. Entertainment, history, whatever. So, there are very few national products, and a lot of Russian ones".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

The anti-gender agenda, which is borrowed from Russia, is embedded within a broader framework of Belarus's dependence on Russia:

"So Russia's influence <on anti-gender sentiments> is significant overall, but it comes in a package. It's simply political influence on Belarus".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

When asked whether homophobic legislative initiatives would have emerged in Belarus if they hadn't existed in Russia, human rights activists tend to answer negatively:

"If these laws hadn't been passed in Russia, then in principle this probably wouldn't have happened in Belarus".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Alisa Sarmant attributes this to close cooperation between Belarus and Russia and the harmonization of legislation *"within the framework of roadmaps"*. Another human rights activist draws attention to the mutual influence of Russia and Belarus, although she notes that, chronologically, anti-gender legislation appeared in Russia earlier:

"I can't estimate the degree, but it certainly started in Russia earlier than in Belarus, and most likely, it spread there. But, you know, there was this two-way movement; some things were tested in Belarus and then adopted in Russia".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

Thus, one can speak of mutual influence between Russia and Belarus.

In Georgia, Russian influence is described as less direct, but very active. Eka Tsereteli calls it *"very obvious"*. This influence has previously manifested itself through Russian television broadcasts and the creation of pro-Russian parties. However, human rights activists note that pro-Russian parties have never been popular among voters.

The key moment, according to Georgian human rights activists, was the open adoption of repressive legislation:

"They started introducing repressive laws. The first was the so-called 'Russian law' concerning foreign agents, which was almost entirely copied from Russia. Well, they copied all the repressive laws that had been introduced in Russia over the past 10 or 12 years. But this was done at an accelerated pace over the course of a year and a half. So we have almost all of these laws, with the exception of the latest amendments on extremism. But I think they will appear soon".

Human rights activists view Russian influence, including on anti-gender sentiments, as part of a hybrid war.

In Kazakhstan, Russia's influence manifests itself through the borrowing of ideas and narratives, organizational connections of anti-gender activists, and information campaigns.

Human rights activists trace the origins of "family or traditional values" directly to Russian politics:

"The history of family values began in Russia in 2012. They began depriving people of all these rights. In 2013, they introduced a law banning 'LGBT propaganda', and then they began to crack down on women's rights and, in opposition to gender equality, put forward traditional values – traditional family values. And so it reached Kazakhstan. And in Kazakhstan, people didn't understand what was happening. Family values sound good, but why do they contradict gender equality? There was little analysis, and only a few people understand what's happening".

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminista, Kazakhstan

The concept of "traditional values" was transferred to Kazakhstan with virtually no critical analysis.

Human rights activists pay particular attention to disinformation campaigns that are identifiable as Russian based on their language, style, and references to Russian law:

"This Russian service is spreading fake news. Why do we call them Russian? Because their writing style doesn't correspond to Kazakh Russian... Furthermore, they cite Russian legislation. They write about LGBT+ activists, etc., and then conclude that the LGBT+ movement is recognized as extremist in the Russian Federation. You're writing about citizens of Kazakhstan. What the hell are you talking about?"

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

Human rights activists also point to possible structural ties between anti-gender organizations and Russia, citing possible coordination through law enforcement agencies and the "exchange of methods". Direct connections are confirmed through the Kazakhstan Union of Parents' contacts with Russian organizations and activists, including joint events and public acknowledgements. Anastasia Mashkova-Blagikh was named among the Russian anti-gender activists who frequently speak at Kazakhstani anti-gender events.

In response to the question of whether homophobic legislation would have been adopted in Kazakhstan if it hadn't been in place in Russia, opinions were divided. For example, Rakhat Sadykov responded unequivocally:

I think this movement is aimed at creating a common political space. And this desire on the part of the Russian president to restore the USSR is being done now through the The Collective Security Treaty Organisation. I think there are certain agreements about how this all needs to be promoted, because of such political interests".

Zhanar Sekerbayeva answered the same question less unequivocally:

"I think they probably would have discussed this issue and likely reached some kind of solution, since the global trend toward the right shows us that the Trump administration also wields considerable influence. And they probably would have talked about it, but not with great urgency".

This emphasizes the importance of influence not only from Russia but also from the Trump administration. However, it was precisely under Russia's influence, as the human rights activist assesses the situation, that the process of discussing and adopting the law banning "LGBT propaganda" became so rapid.

What all three countries have in common is the perception of Russia as a key source of the anti-gender agenda, whether through the direct copying of laws, the adoption of "traditional values" rhetoric, organizational connections, or information campaigns. In all three cases, it is emphasized that Russia serves not simply as a role model, but as an active exporter of norms and practices, noting the influence of Russian media and television broadcasts, accessible in all three countries.

The differences lie in the degree and form of this influence. In Belarus, it is described as almost complete dependence and unification "in all respects". In Georgia, it is described as hybrid pressure, encountering public resistance and therefore forced to conceal itself. In Kazakhstan, it is described as a combination of ideological import, probable transnational ties between anti-gender activists, and domestic political calculations, where the Russian model is used selectively but systematically by the authorities.

Comparative characteristics of Russia's influence on anti-gender processes in three countries

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
General assessment of the degree of Russia's influence	Very high; described as direct, systemic and almost total dependence.	Noticeable and "very obvious", but less direct.	Significant, but more indirect and hybrid.
The nature of the influence on anti-gender processes	Direct and targeted; built into the general format of political dependence.	Hybrid influence through borrowed laws, parties and information tools.	Ideological import, organizational connections between anti-gender activists in Kazakhstan and Russia, and Russian information campaigns.
Borrowing rhetoric	An almost verbatim copy of Russian narratives.	Borrowing anti-gender narratives under the guise of Georgian "traditional values".	Transferring the concept of "traditional/family values" from the Russian context without deep reflection.
Borrowing legislation	Homophobic initiatives are emerging in the wake of Russian ones; they likely wouldn't have arisen without Russian laws.	The adoption of many Russian repressive laws at an accelerated pace.	Legislative initiatives are partially borrowed.

Parameter	Belarus	Georgia	Kazakhstan
The role of media and information space	Up to 70-80% of television content is Russian products; Russian TV channels have significant influence.	Influence of Russian television broadcasting, as well as through social networks.	Serious influence of Russian television channels. Disinformation campaigns about activists in Russian.
Organizational connections	Influence is built into interstate integration and unification.	The presence of pro-Russian parties, although electorally weak.	Connections between anti-gender organizations and Russian structures; participation of Russian activists in events.
Answer to the question: would there be homophobic legislation without Russia?	Most likely not; there is a high probability that without the Russian example it would not have appeared.	Probably not in its current form; the Georgian context is institutionally different.	Opinions are divided: some believe it is not; others allow for the influence of the global rightward turn (including the US), but acknowledge Russia's role in accelerating the law's adoption.
Key feature of influence	Almost complete synchronization and mutual legal unification.	Hybrid influence encountering public resistance.	A combination of Russian influence and multi-vector foreign policy balancing.

Forms of feminist and queer resistance: effective strategies and best practices

Responses from human rights activists in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan demonstrate that resistance to anti-gender movements is built as a set of long-term, mutually reinforcing strategies aimed at community survival, reducing stigma, and gradually changing societal and institutional contexts.

In Belarus, key forms of resistance are working with the information space and coalition building in the context of an almost completely closed public space.

Human rights activists emphasize the fundamental importance of systematic collaboration with independent and queer media:

"We collaborate with partner organizations and media outlets. And not just with queer media; we also work with independent publications to broaden the coverage of this topic. It's important to us that they write and talk more about LGBT+ people in a positive and humane manner – at least the resources we have access to. We want them to talk about what's really going on".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Alisa Sarmant also highlights the production of one's own content as a strategy for countering anti-gender narratives and emphasizes the importance of media campaigns:

We're doing everything we can to counter this agenda. Formally, we're not media, but in essence, we also

perform a media function: we release informational videos and educational materials on our social media".

This strategy is aimed at countering the monopoly of state propaganda and engaging with the "swing-voters", as another human rights activist noted:

"In a political struggle, in a political situation, there are opponents, supporters, and then there's this fluctuating middle. <We need to> work with those who doubt, reach them, and tell them, that is, advance our agenda".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

International advocacy through coalition and shadow reporting is becoming an important practice of solidarity and resistance:

"To get the most complete picture of what's happening, we participate in coalitions and joint human rights initiatives. I also chair the Trans Coalition, the largest trans coalition in the EECA region. As part of TG House's activities, we prepare information materials and analytical reports, including at the international level. We have submitted alternative reports under the UN Universal Periodic Review procedure, publish an annual monitoring report on the situation of LGBT+ people in Belarus, and meet with UN rapporteurs and experts, as well as representatives of the Council of Europe and other European structures".

Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus

Another human rights defender notes:

"Organizations cooperate with each other, reach agreements, and unite for advocacy work".

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

Advocacy allows to document rights violations and inform the international community about them, even in the absence of internal channels of influence.

One of the study participants identified polarization and the concept of "safety" as a serious problem in Belarusian society:

"It seems to me that when we succumb to this polarization, we succumb to it. ...As a result, all these groups become isolated. And then it's very easy for anti-gender forces, including the state, to track them down, seize them, and do something with them. I don't think isolation is the solution, because at first it's as if these safe spaces, these safe spaces, gradually turn into ghettos; we isolate ourselves".

Such tactics not only weaken collective resistance but also increase the fragmentation of society, allowing dominant forces to manipulate narratives about “enemies” and justify repression.

Among the key lessons for the human rights community in Belarus, the study participants identified the following:

- **Consolidation of efforts and solidarity:** *“The broader the coalition, the stronger the collective voice and the more opportunities there are to talk about these issues publicly and at different levels”.*
Alisa Sarmant, TG House, Belarus
- **Abandoning project planning and funding:** *“Our situation is such that we often need resources for a very rapid response. Something happens, and someone evacuates people. You can’t program this into a project a year in advance. This is the problem with all donors: they all give some money for resources, for this project funding. This is very unsustainable. In other words, it makes us unsustainable. Consequently, we can’t offer anything to the people we work for, whose interests we are trying to protect, or information about whose rights violations we are collecting. This is a clear recommendation that should exist. ... And, perhaps, this has also created a culture of organizations that don’t understand how to work long-term, how to work strategically, but work from project to project. This contributes to burnout; it’s unsustainable; it’s incapable of implementing transformative changes. In other words, the entire mechanics of project management are completely unfavorable for organizational sustainability”.*
Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus
- **Recording and analyzing what’s happening:** *“We need to record all of this because it’s crucial to preserve history. Analyzing certain narratives, if possible, is important. Because history does repeat itself. And it’s important for the new generation of feminists and activists to learn and see that this has happened before”.*
Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus
- **Reflection:** *“A lot of reflection is needed. Imperialism seeps through such trivial things; imperialism even seeps through aid. And I understand that self-reflection is incredibly important”.*
Nasta Bazar, human rights defender, Belarus

- **Self-preservation and self-care:** *"We need to preserve ourselves, we need to maintain access to our target groups, the people we work with, to understand what's happening to them. If we want to survive long-term, to pass on this knowledge, to be a bridge between different generations, then we need to... As feminists say, self-care is a political act. Hope is also a political act. We need to practice this to survive. We need to wait for these brighter times. And, of course, we need to do something to make them come".*

Anonymous human rights defender, Belarus

In Georgia, human rights defender identified solidarity, an intersectional approach, depolarization of society, and a rejection of isolationist identity politics as the most effective resistance strategies.

An intersectional approach, solidarity, and a refusal to unite around a single identity are parts of a single, comprehensive strategy. As Eka Tsereteli notes:

"Our organizations always strive to apply an intersectional feminist approach. This means that we always believe in the need for connections with other movements, of course. Isolation, especially now, is counterproductive for any movement, and especially for the LGBT+ movement. And so is closing oneself off to identity politics".

In other words, political struggle should be based on coalition building, which allows for greater solidarity between different groups and the accumulation of resources.

According to the human rights defender, it's important to find common ground with diverse groups:

"In my opinion, the main thing is to counter the polarization of society. Find commonalities and talk about them, because we all have different identities. We're not just LGBT+, but we can also be rural residents, we can be, I don't know, poor, Christians, or atheists, etc. So build narratives on similarities in identity, not on differences".

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

Eka Tsereteli cites silence in response to provocative propaganda from the ruling party as another successful strategy:

"Together with civil society and opposition parties, we developed a kind of strategy of silence to avoid engaging in discussions with the ruling party about 'LGBT propaganda', so when they raised the issue, we didn't respond at all. Neither we, nor the opposition parties, nor the ruling party were able to derive any benefit from this propaganda".

In addition, both human rights activists from Georgia spoke about the importance of systemic educational work (educational programs, trainings, workshops), as well as long-term work to build solidarity.

Among the key lessons for the human rights community in Georgia, the study participants identified the following:

- **Promoting proactive strategies over reactive ones:**
Don't wait for authoritarian tendencies to reach your country, but develop countermeasures in advance. *"So why are you passively waiting for a catastrophe to happen instead of developing proactive strategies to prevent it? But you know, that's a comfort zone".*
- **Criticism of the superficial assessment of democratization:**
"It's very superficial to measure democratization in a simplified way, for example, solely by the number of laws or legislative acts and similar indicators. And it's unfair when international stakeholders believe that we are in a better position than, for example, Belarus and Azerbaijan and should be content with what we have".
- **Analyzing small victories and preparing for failures:** Study the reasons for authoritarian retreats (as in Georgia in 2023, when the law on foreign agents was not passed) to develop counter-strategies. *"Why did we win then? We should have asked this question. Why did they retreat? Perhaps now they are preparing even more actively, but no one is listening. So they develop a new strategy and then reintroduce the law. And in the end, they win".*
- **Monitoring and analyzing hostile discourses:** Be vigilant and analyze hostile narratives proactively to anticipate risks. Track the translation of these narratives into real policies, institutions, and legislation, and be alert to the moment when they are actively implemented. *"It is crucial to analyze hostile discourses and recognize the moments when these discourses are actually implemented and institutionalized in real policies, real institutions, and real legislation".*

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

Eka Tsereteli, Women's Initiatives Supporting Group, Georgia

Anonymous human rights defender, Georgia

- **International advocacy.** Turn to international human rights mechanisms, as local ones are no longer effective.
- **Monitoring human rights violations:** Document all cases systematically and preserve data for future reference.

Kazakhstani human rights activists propose a set of strategies for resisting anti-gender and authoritarian tendencies that combines local mobilization, international solidarity, and long-term optimism.

A key strategy proposed by Kazakhstani human rights activists is a proactive agenda rather than a reactive defense: don't waste resources on repelling attacks, but rather advance your causes while ignoring provocations.

"One strategy we believe could work is to do what you believe is right, rather than trying to counter them only after the fact, simply pushing back against whatever they do. Instead, we decided to do what we have the resources for. So, if we want to talk about women in politics, we have to talk about women in politics. So just ignore these attacks. If you have the resources and the opportunity, then I think that's the best strategy to counter all of this".

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

This strategy is complemented by the development of horizontal networks of LGBT+ initiatives that are difficult to eradicate entirely: targeted authoritarian repressions target individual actors, but others continue their work.

"We've created so many LGBT+ initiatives, they're so horizontal, that if you remove some participants, others will remain. So if you want to kill them, if you want to get rid of this entire movement, you'll have to commit genocide".

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

Human rights defenders from Kazakhstan also speak about the importance of consolidation and solidarity, including international solidarity and the exchange of experiences. Rakhat Sadykov notes the growing solidarity following the adoption of the "LGBT propaganda" law:

"I see this consolidation; it's very positive support from journalists who may never have covered sensitive topics like LGBT+, just journalists, media outlets, and environmental activists".

Zhanar Sekerbaeva identified a feminist decolonial approach as an important strategy for combating the anti-gender movement:

"I think we really should pay more attention to decolonization, because the US and Russia truly see themselves as empires. Today's world is a collection of empires, and what we see now is the agony – the agony of patriarchy".

And finally, an important strategy is self-preservation:

"Time is cyclical, and the situation will always change. The question here is how to truly maintain the community's safety so that people can survive this moment. It seems to me that the question here is about some kind of search... for alternative opportunities and resources for organizations and initiatives. Preserve yourself, preserve the community, maintain a safe space, as much as possible".

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

Among the key lessons for the human rights community in Kazakhstan, the study participants identified the following:

- **Rejecting the "fleeing" tactic:** Stop relying on emigration as salvation, recognizing its colonial logic. *"The tactic of flight... must be stopped, because there is nowhere to run... every place must be safe. And this tactic of flight is also colonial in nature. It means that only some places, some governments, or some countries deserve to live in prosperity and democracy, while other places are just dumping grounds".*

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

- **Decolonization of thinking and the universality of human rights:** *"Human rights must be universal... there is no point in thinking that some countries deserve human rights more than others. This is a colonial approach".*

Gulzada Serzhan, Feminita, Kazakhstan

- **Minimizing interaction with committed anti-gender movement activists:** *"First of all, we need to interact less with the anti-gender movement, because these are people who are already 100% convinced, and they harbor a ton of myths about LGBT+ people. We have 10% allies, 10% of whom are part of the anti-gender movement, and 80% of people who, in fact, are preoccupied with*

completely different ideas and who, in principle, could potentially continue to be allies of queer people”.

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

- **Self-care:** *“Take care of your mental health... first you need to put on a mask, and then put it on the child or the passenger next to you”.*

Anonymous human rights defender, Kazakhstan

- **Sharing unique resistance experiences:** Sharing Central Asian resistance practices with the world, inviting dialogue despite the region’s “invisibility”. *“I think we have very good resistance methods. Our countries aren’t usually considered, let’s say, Western countries; we’re not considered particularly important. So sometimes we feel alone. But I think we’ve already developed very good resistance methods. We can share them”.*

Zhanar Sekerbayeva, Feminita, Kazakhstan

In all three countries, effective feminist and queer resistance is conceived not as a quick victory over anti-gender movements, but as a combination of media work, coalition building, international advocacy, educational practices, and depolarization strategies. What they have in common is a shift away from narrow reactivity and a focus on alternative narratives and solidarity. Together, these practices define resistance as a long-term process of preserving communities and meanings in the face of increasing pressure.

Conclusion

A comparative study of anti-gender movements in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan shows that anti-gender ideology has become a significant element in state policy, public rhetoric, and mechanisms of control over civil society in these countries. Despite differences in political regimes, levels of repression, and institutional conditions, in all three cases, the anti-gender agenda is used as a tool for symbolic mobilization, legitimization of authoritarian practices, and restrictions on the rights of women and LGBT+ people.

An analysis of the legislative, political, and social context from 2020 to 2025 reveals a general trend toward a conservative turn and a narrowing of rights and freedoms. In Belarus, this process is most severe and pervasive: after 2020, the country effectively transitioned to a model of a consolidated repressive regime, in which independent civil society was systematically destroyed, and anti-gender policies were integrated into the logic of the fight against “extremism”. Anti-LGBT+ initiatives, expansive interpretations of pornography, the rhetoric of “child protection,” and the active adoption of Russian legislative models create an environment in which any form of feminist and queer visibility is viewed as a threat to statehood.

Georgia, in turn, is demonstrating a different, but no less alarming, scenario. While formally preserving democratic institutions and the progressive legal framework adopted in previous years under pressure from European integration, the country is undergoing a rapid authoritarian drift. Anti-gender policies in Georgia are manifested through a combination of nationalist, anti-European, and religious discourse, as well as through the institutionalization of discrimination against LGBT+ people. The adoption of laws on “foreign agents” and “LGBT propaganda” demonstrates a shift from symbolic rhetoric to systemic restrictions, while the state continues to avoid direct mass repression, relying on legal uncertainty and the deterrent effect of repressive norms.

Kazakhstan presents a hybrid and contradictory case. On the one hand, the country has seen some positive shifts in women's rights, including the criminalization of battery and increased penalties for domestic violence. On the other hand, these changes coexist with increasing anti-LGBT+ rhetoric, increased censorship, pressure on feminist and queer organizations, and the gradual adoption of repressive models similar to those in Russia. Kazakhstan's gender policy is being developed selectively: the state responds to high-profile cases and public pressure, but simultaneously reiterates the anti-gender agenda as a tool of control, calling for the protection of "traditional values".

A comparative analysis of the human rights sector reveals that in all three countries, feminist and queer organizations find themselves in a heightened state of vulnerability. Common features include the financial strangulation of NGOs, increased risks for activists, forced unpaid work, and a shift in focus from developing and promoting their own narrative to survival and crisis response. However, the differences are fundamental. In Belarus, the human rights sector has been almost completely driven into exile and underground; in Georgia, it formally survives but is undermined through legal mechanisms of control, including economic ones; in Kazakhstan, the pressure is less direct but systemic and accompanied by constant uncertainty.

Anti-LGBT+ and anti-gender policies in all three countries are built around similar narratives: "child protection", "traditional family values", "national sovereignty", and the juxtaposition of "Western ideology" with local culture. These narratives are used to legitimize censorship, restrictions on freedom of expression, and discriminatory practices. Meanwhile, Belarus and Georgia have seen direct legislative enshrinement of bans (although the law banning "LGBT propaganda" in Belarus has not yet reached the final stage of adoption), while in Kazakhstan, informal pressure has long prevailed, eventually transforming into formal legal restrictions.

The study devotes special attention to analyzing the key actors in anti-gender movements. In all three countries, state institutions, pro-government public organizations, religious structures, and individual media figures play a significant role. A significant difference lies in the degree of institutionalization: in Belarus and Georgia, the anti-gender agenda is openly supported at the highest political level, whereas in Kazakhstan, it is often promoted through "public initiatives", petitions, and statements by individual members

of parliament, creating the illusion of “public demand”.

An analysis of Russia’s influence confirms the study’s initial hypothesis, but in a non-categorical, non-deterministic manner. Russia is a considerable source of anti-gender ideology, narratives, and legal models, but its influence is realized through local contexts and interests. In Belarus, this influence is most direct and institutionalized; in Georgia, it is mediated through anti-European rhetoric, a desire for security, and networks of pro-Russian activists and political parties; in Kazakhstan, it is mediated through the selective adoption of discourses and practices while formally distancing itself from Russian policy. Thus, anti-gender movements in the region should be viewed as the result of the interaction of transnational and local dynamics, rather than as a simple “copying” of the Russian model.

Finally, an analysis of forms of feminist and queer resistance reveals that even under increasing pressure, activist communities continue to develop strategies for survival, solidarity, and adaptation. In all three countries, horizontal networks, transnational collaboration, the exchange of experiences and knowledge, and a focus on safety and care within communities play a significant role. At the same time, the space for public visibility and long-term advocacy is significantly shrinking, threatening the long-term sustainability of the movements.

Overall, the study demonstrates that anti-gender policies in Belarus, Georgia, and Kazakhstan are not a temporary phenomenon, but a structural element of current political regimes. They are closely linked to authoritarian tendencies, the crisis of democratic institutions, and states’ attempts to control social change. Understanding these processes and their comparative analysis are key to developing effective strategies of resistance and supporting feminist and queer movements in the region.

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