

Distinguished delegates, colleagues,

I speak on behalf of the Coalition of Fem Queer Initiatives from Belarus, a network of activists and initiatives supporting LGBTQ+ people in one of the most repressive environments in Europe.

In the previous UPR cycle, Belarus received recommendations to eliminate violence, harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, to provide training for law enforcement, and to ensure the right to peaceful assembly for LGBTQ+ persons. The State rejected these recommendations. Since then, the situation has deteriorated sharply.

Particularly concerning are the following five areas: adoption and implementation of discriminatory laws; deterioration of the situation of (LGBTQ+) NGOs and activists; systemic discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; gender-based violence; and barriers in health care.

Over the past three years, new laws have been introduced to erase LGBTQ+ people from public life. In 2022, the Constitution was amended to define marriage only as between a man and a woman. In 2024, the Ministry of Culture expanded the definition of “pornography” to include same-sex relations, enabling the use of Article 343 of the Criminal Code against the queer community. In February 2025, the Law on the Rights of the Child was amended to classify “propaganda of homosexual relations” as harmful to children, without defining what “propaganda” means. This creates a direct risk of prosecution, including for parents raising children to accept diversity and equality.

Independent LGBTQ+ organizations have been shut down since 2020 as part of a broader crackdown on civil society. Activists face raids, arbitrary detention, and torture. State-affiliated media and police-linked Telegram channels publish coerced “confession” videos and personal data, portraying LGBTQ+ people as criminals or enemies of the State.

Discrimination is systemic. LGBTQ+ people are denied medical care, harassed in schools, and face loss of employment because of their identity. LGBTQ women face pressure from guardianship authorities and threats of losing parental rights. Belarus has no comprehensive domestic violence law and has refused to ratify the Istanbul Convention, leaving survivors without adequate legal protection.

Gender-based and sexualized violence is widespread and often comes from law enforcement. Transgender and queer women have reported forced nudity, public humiliation, sexualized comments, and denial of medical care. In detention, transgender women are placed in male facilities, violating international human rights standards and putting them at aggravated risk of violence and humiliation from both fellow prisoners and the administration.

Healthcare barriers are severe. The Interdepartmental Gender Transition Commission delays approvals for months or years, with no clear appeal process, forcing people into unsafe self-

medication. Lesbian couples face restrictions in reproductive health services, including partner-assisted childbirth and donor choice, due to discriminatory institutional rules.

Today, LGBTQ+ people and women in Belarus are in danger and face systemic repression from the State.

**We call for the following actions, in line with our written submission:**

1. **Repeal discriminatory laws and amendments** — including those that ban or restrict information about LGBTQ+ people, equate same-sex relations with pornography, and use the concept of “propaganda” to target the community.
2. **Adopt and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination protections** — covering sexual orientation, gender identity and gender, and create an independent mechanism for considering complaints related to SOGI and gender-based discrimination, with the participation of human rights organizations in both complaint review and the development of relevant laws and practices.
3. **Strengthen protection from gender-based and domestic violence** — ratify the Istanbul Convention, adopt a domestic violence law, ensure that transgender women and non-binary people are not placed in prisons, detention centers, or other facilities that do not correspond with their gender identity, and provide mandatory training for law enforcement and penitentiary staff on human rights, gender equality, and SOGI.
4. **Guarantee civic freedoms and restore non-government organizations** — ensure freedom of peaceful assembly and expression for all, and end persecution of activists and closure of organizations working on women’s and LGBTQ+ rights.
5. **Ensure equal access to healthcare and reproductive rights** — including gender-affirming care, legal gender recognition based on self-determination, and reproductive services without discrimination.

Thank you.