

## &gt;THEMES

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

## BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

In March, President Dodik (Republika Srpska) [called](#) for the adoption of a foreign agents law, similar to that in Russia. Dodik's statements were widely [criticised](#) in the country and by the EU, and later by the Venice Commission and the OSCE in a [joint opinion](#). The law was adopted a few weeks later.

Dodik also [shared](#) plans that content on LGBT people would be [banned](#) in schools and LGBT activists would not be allowed to enter schools, citing the Hungarian 'propaganda law' as a positive example.

## KAZAKHSTAN

Civil society groups [continued](#) being harassed and raided by the authorities.

Since 2017 'Feminita' cannot register a public fund and work with legal status. In 2023 activists lost trials again and the number of these denials equaled 11.

On 21 September, the State Revenue Committee of the Finance Ministry [published](#) a "foreign funding register", which lists organisations and individuals who receive funds from abroad for research, legal assistance, and other areas of work. The publication of this information was required in the 2012 amendments of the tax law and the Committee's did announce in March that they would publish later in 2023. Civil society organisations in Kazakhstan and abroad called for the immediate withdrawal of the register (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), which [lists](#) several groups working on LGBTQI rights issues, as well as journalists and bloggers.

Only a few days later, NGOs [started](#) facing close monitoring and new reporting and administrative burdens, for instance, from banks.

## KYRGYSTAN

After MP Nadira Narmatova's (Ata-Zhurt Kyrgyzstan) [request](#) for a stricter foreign agents law in 2022, the public consultation on amending the law on non-profit non-governmental organisations was [launched](#) in May. The bill would place NGOs under the control of the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Justice with regard to internal and financial matters. It would also [introduce](#) the concept of 'foreign non-governmental organisation'. The law aims at restricting the freedom of speech of civil

society, as it threatens the closure of NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic, including LGBT+ organisations, as well as the persecution of human rights defenders and activists.

The law introduces the term "foreign representative," and equates advocacy and civic activism with "political activity" and activists who are undesirable to the authorities may be subject to a fine or five to ten years in prison. In October, at the meeting of the parliamentary committee discussing the amendments a video was [shown](#) by the members of the parliament about the alleged harm that NGOs cause in the country, including through 'LGBT propaganda'. On 25 October, the draft bill passed the first reading without public discussion.

## RUSSIA

The authorities continued adding NGOs, groups, websites, media outlets, activists, and journalists to their foreign agent registry (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), also under Freedom of Expression). According to Coming Out monitoring data, 10 individuals and eight organisations were identified as foreign agents for so-called LGBT propaganda in 2023. In 2022, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that the foreign agent law violates human rights law, but Russia [made](#) it clear it would not implement the judgement.

In November 2023, the Russian LGBT Network, Mayak, LGBT activists [filed](#) the first complaint against the law on "foreign agents" to the UN Human Rights Committee. The Ministry of Justice [demanded](#) that the 'International LGBT Public Movement' be [recognised](#) as an extremist organisation and its activities banned in Russia. On November 30, in a hearing that took place behind closed doors with no defence present, the Supreme Court ruled that the "international LGBT social movement" is to be added to the country's list of "extremist" organisations. The Supreme Court decision declared any LGBT activism in Russia [criminal](#). Participation in such activities is punishable by fines or imprisonment. Under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, individuals considered to be "organisers" and "participants" may face up to [12 years](#) in prison, and participants of the activities of such organisations may face from two to six years in prison. Symbols of "extremist" organisations (including the rainbow flag) are banned, and display of these symbols may lead to administrative arrest of up to 15 days detention under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences. The human rights initiative

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First Department reported that in January 2024, Russian authorities opened the first administrative case against an artist for posting a “rainbow flag” on the Internet. Other possible consequences for those who are investigated or prosecuted include having their bank accounts blocked and facing restriction of various rights. In connection with this court decision, public offline activities of LGBT initiatives were stopped, and many LGBT initiatives and LGBT activists relocated abroad. LGBT initiatives continue to work in Russia, hiding it and seeking other, non-public formats for their activities within the country.

On December 1, less than 48 hours after the Supreme Court banned the “international LGBT movement” as “extremist”, security forces raided gay clubs and bars across Moscow, including a nightclub, a male sauna, and a bar that hosted LGBTQ+ parties, under the pretext of a drug raid. Eyewitnesses told journalists that people’s documents were checked and photographed by the security services.

### TURKEY

The political rhetoric during this year’s elections targeted LGBTI+ associations and included calls for their closure. The Platform for Unity in Idea and Struggle submitted a petition to the Turkish Grand National Assembly with 150,000 signatures, calling for the closure of LGBTI+ organisations.

Hacettepe University closed the LGBTI+ student club, which had official status.

83 lawyers established an LGBTI+ Rights Commission in the Adana Bar Association.

### UZBEKISTAN

The proposal at the end of 2022 from the Information and Mass Communications Agency to amend the Information Code, which would ban “the use of mass media for the purposes of [...] propaganda of unnatural relations between same-sex persons” was not adopted this year, and sent for revision.