

OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION AND
FACT SHEETS FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

URGENT DEVELOPMENTS AND CALL FOR ACTION

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Disinformation Campaign by Anti-Gender/Anti-LGBTI+ Movement: The New Draft-Law “On Sexual and Reproductive Health”

In April 2024, the Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection opened a public consultation for a new draft law “**On sexual and reproductive health**”¹. The draft law includes broad provisions on medically assisted reproduction (RMA) and surrogacy. This generalization risks leaving these practices unregulated, causing confusion among medical professionals and compromising individuals' rights to access these methods. The draft law discriminates against the right of every individual to have children through RMA methods and surrogacy, failing to adapt to international human rights standards. Articles 15 and 19 of the draft law restrict RMA techniques to heterosexual couples and single women, excluding same-sex couples. Similarly, Article 3, point n, stipulates that a surrogate can only bear a child for another couple, defined exclusively as a married heterosexual pair, who cannot conceive naturally.

In our official position during the public consultation, we highlighted these and other issues, expressing our strong disagreement with the draft law's current provisions.

Hate Rhetoric Spearheaded by the Anti-Gender/Anti-LGBTI+ Movement

Amidst the public consultation, representatives of the anti-gender movement, called the Pro-Family and Pro-Life Coalition, launched a disinformation campaign against LGBTI+ communities. They falsely linked the surrogacy provisions to alleged efforts by the LGBTI community to infiltrate Albanian families. Despite our clarification that the draft law does not permit surrogacy for same-sex couples, the coalition propagated malicious narratives.

A coalition representative claimed that the **"aggressive gay agenda"** seeks to **"take babies from mothers' chests and give them to two trans men,"** portraying the LGBTI+ community as **"playing with the blood of Albanian babies."**²

Connection to the Symbolic Religious Marriage Ceremony

During **Pride Month**, on May 19, 2024, two lesbian women in a 14-year relationship held a symbolic religious marriage ceremony in Tirana. Although same-sex marriages are not legally recognized in Albania, they initiated a strategic litigation process on May 17, 2024, by submitting a marriage declaration request to the Civil Registry Office. The ceremony, conducted by British Methodist Church pastors, took place on the terrace of Tirana Municipality Hall—a public space available for use to all taxpayers.³

This event, part of the official pride calendar organized by five main LGBTI organizations in Albania, triggered another wave of disinformation, defamation, and hate speech led by the **Pro-Family and Life Coalition** and **religious organizations**.



¹Link: <https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/Konsultime/Detaje/727>

²Link: <https://www.syri.net/sociale/690172/projektligji-per-surrogacine-dorina-mema-jemi-te-braktiksur-nga-kryeministri-revolta-qytetare-shume-e-drejte/>

³Link: <https://www.historiaime.al/identitet/e-verteta-per-dasmen/>

Recent Anti-LGBTI Campaigns and Actions

"Manifesto of Life" and Pro-Family Petition

On May 23, 2024, the Pro Life and Family coalition organized the "Manifesto of Life," where they launched a pro-family petition and spread false claims that the LGBTI community aims to depopulate the country and degender Albanian children.⁴ One representative publicly declared, **"If the state does not take measures to stop homosexual propaganda in the country, the LGBTI+ community will enter schools and inject hormones into the bodies of Albanian children."**

They also alleged political connections between LGBTI+ community and the mayor of Tirana, since he allowed the using of the terrace of the municipality for the ceremony as supposed evidence. Prominent public figures and religious leaders echoed these narratives, leading to widespread media coverage and significant public support for anti-LGBTI sentiments. In all their public appearances, these representatives also released statements targeting LGBTI+ organizations and activists, disclosing their names, revealing details about their salaries, and accusing them of having anti-Albanian agendas.

On May 24, 2024, several religious associations, including **Mexhllis, Tumed, Ardhmeria, Lidhja e Hoxhallareve te Shqiperise, Thirrja ne Miresi, Qendra per Kulturen Islame Evropiane, Ensar, Unioni Shqiptar I Teologeve and Qendra "Lumturo Dhimbjen"**, held a rally to defend "family and life."⁵

On May 30, 2024, they filed a criminal complaint against the mayor of Tirana, accusing him of abuse of duty for allowing the symbolic lesbian marriage on the terrace of Tirana Municipality.⁶



⁴ Link: <https://www.hashtag.al/index.php/2024/05/23/te-mbrojme-familjen-koalicioni-pro-familjes-tubim-ne-sheshin-skenderbej-nis-mbledhjen-e-firmave/>

⁵ Link: https://www.facebook.com/events/677662744486782?locale=hy_AM

⁶ Link: <https://www.mcntv.al/node/196995>

Impact of Misinformation, Defamation, and Hate Speech on Albanian LGBTI+ Communities

The widespread misinformation, defamation, and hate speech targeting the LGBTI community in Albania have had profound and devastating effects. This toxic environment has significantly intensified social stigma, leading to increased discrimination, harassment, and violence against LGBTI individuals. Many face hostility in their workplaces, schools, and even within their families, resulting in social isolation and severe mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression.

The pervasive fear of public exposure forces many LGBTI individuals to hide their identities, denying them the basic freedom to live authentically. The dissemination of harmful stereotypes further undermines efforts to secure legal protections and social acceptance, leaving LGBTI people vulnerable and marginalized.

Immediately following the symbolic marriage ceremony, a transgender woman was brutally attacked by a group of men near Tirana municipality, in a central area of the capital. The day after a protest by the Muslim community, a group of minors threw stones at the representative of the LGBTI Alliance in Tirana. This same violent behavior was repeated against a participant in Tirana Pride 2024.

These incidents illustrate the severe and immediate consequences of unchecked hate speech and disinformation, highlighting the urgent need for protective measures and support for the LGBTI community in Albania.

Hindrance to Legal Reforms

This climate of intolerance and hostility not only jeopardizes the safety, dignity, and well-being of every LGBTI citizen but also severely hinders legal reforms. In an atmosphere where political will is already lacking, sustained anti-LGBTI rhetoric stifles progress by discouraging lawmakers from advocating for necessary legal changes. The fear of backlash from conservative factions and a misinformed public makes it even more challenging to advance policies that protect and recognize LGBTI rights, perpetuating a cycle of discrimination and legislative inertia.



Call for Action

Given these urgent developments, it is imperative for international partners and stakeholders to take immediate and decisive action to support the LGBTI community in Albania.

Your support is crucial in ensuring our rights are protected and our voices are heard!

We urgently call upon international partners and stakeholders to take the following actions to support the LGBTI community in Albania:

1. Condemnation of Anti-LGBTI Actions:

- Publicly and unequivocally condemn the recent rise in anti-LGBTI rhetoric and actions in Albania, emphasizing the urgent need for human rights and equality.
- Demand that the Albanian government uphold its international human rights commitments protecting LGBTI individuals.

2. Diplomatic Pressure:

- Use all available diplomatic channels to raise urgent concerns about the treatment of the LGBTI community with Albanian officials, pressing them to take immediate steps to address discrimination and hate speech.
- Encourage embassies and international organizations in Albania to visibly and actively support LGBTI events and initiatives, demonstrating unwavering solidarity.

3. Support for Strategic Litigation:

- Provide support for the strategic litigation process initiated by the two lesbian women seeking recognition of their marriage.
- Fund legal aid programs that assist LGBTI individuals in pursuing justice and protecting their rights urgently.

4. International Solidarity Campaigns:

- Organize international solidarity campaigns, including public statements, to support the Albanian LGBTI community.
- Mobilize global networks to apply pressure on the Albanian government and public figures who are perpetuating hate speech and discrimination.



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