

United Nations Human Rights Council, 32nd Session (13 June – 1 July 2016)
Item 6; UPR: Latvia
Friday 24th June 2016
Speaker: BHA/EHF Representative, Cordelia Tucker O’Sullivan

Thank you, Mr. President.

While we welcome the efforts made by Latvia to promote the rights of LGBTI persons, we remain gravely concerned over the continuing legal and social discrimination to which they are subjected.

In 2006, Parliament amended the country’s constitution to define marriage as ‘a union between a man and a woman’,¹ and in 2015, amended the Education Law, requiring schools to provide ‘morality’ education based on constitutional values. Not only is this concerning in the sense that Latvia may breach its international obligations to respect freedom of expression and the requirement of non-discrimination with regards to the relationships and families of LGBTI persons, but there is a risk that it would restrict children’s access to sex and relationships education which could potentially infringe on their right to the highest standard of mental and physical health.²

In the first 9 months of 2015, Latvian NGO Mozaika recorded 14 attacks against LGBTI persons due to their sexual orientation. Victims expressed their unwillingness to report the attacks to the police for fear that they would not be taken seriously, which, given that the legal prohibition on incitement to hatred does not extend to LGBTI persons, is not surprising.³

In addition to this, a recent opinion poll shows worrying data on the social attitudes towards LGBTI persons. In response to the question ‘would you consider homosexuality to be a norm in every society’ only 4% agreed, while 79% of respondents either entirely, or at least partly, disagree. In addition, Latvian inhabitants often said they would not like to be neighbours with people belonging to sexual minorities (26%), and said that sexual minorities are the social group most at risk of suffering hate crimes (48%).⁴

We urge Latvia as a member of this Council to reconsider its discriminatory laws and practices which infringe upon the rights of LGBTI persons, and to promote a positive image of LGBTI persons, so as to combat anti-LGBTI sentiment and stigma present in Latvian society.

Thank you.

¹ <http://www.saeima.lv/en/legislation/constitution>, article 110

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/latvia/report-latvia/>

³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/latvia/report-latvia/>

⁴ <http://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/latvia.pdf>