

Ten Years in Prison for Working for a Non-Profit: Proposed Kyrgyzstani ‘Foreign Representatives’ Bill

[statement & call to action](#), [non-discrimination](#), [lgbti](#)

On 25 October 2023, the Kyrgyzstani Parliament **approved the first reading of the [draft law on ‘foreign representatives’](#)** without debate. The bill will become law if it is approved in two more parliamentary readings and signed by the president.

What’s in the ‘foreign representatives’ bill?

The draft law would label non-profits that receive funding from abroad and carry out political activities as ‘foreign representatives’. Political activity is defined as actions aiming to influence state decisions, to change state policies, or to form public opinion for these purposes.

The law would impose burdensome requirements on all non-profits. Some of the other concerning requirements include:

- Organisations that receive foreign funding will be registered as ‘foreign representatives’
 - The Ministry of Justice will have the right to interfere in their internal affairs.
- It introduces a new concept into the Criminal Code. Establishing a non-profit that “infringes on the personality and rights of citizens” will be a criminal offence. This is punishable by:
 - A fine of 50,000 – 100,000 soms (approximately 500 – 1,000 EUR) or up to five years in prison.
 - “Active participation in an organisation” would be **punishable by up to 10 years in prison**. This is approximately the same number of years you can get for murder in Kyrgyzstan.

The draft law is not a stand-alone initiative. It was presented alongside other legal proposals on “mass media” and “protecting children from harmful information”. Taken together, these laws pose a serious threat to free speech and democracy in Kyrgyzstan.

How could the bill harm LGBTI and other human rights organisations?

This draft law closely follows [Russia’s ‘foreign agents’ law](#). Just as in Russia, the bill will likely cause many non-profits to close. LGBTI organisations and groups will be among the first affected. They are already targeted under the anti-LGBTI gag law. However, LGBTI organisations are even more vulnerable in Kyrgyzstan. This is because they cannot trust courts and political leaders. LGBTI activists in particular are at risk of excessive criminal penalties of five or 10 years.

If these organisations close, thousands of people will be left without support. Marginalised groups will feel the greatest impact. In particular, trans and LGBTI people would lose access to:

- Essential information and referrals
- Support and services
- Assistance to defend their rights and freedoms
- Spaces to meet peers.

This law could have a disastrous impact on communities that rely on non-profits for services. And, in the long-term, this law will severely impact civil society's ability to hold the state accountable.

What can you do?

TGEU calls on all stakeholders to take a firm stance against this bill. You can read our full Position Paper to learn more and find our full list of recommendations.

Main recommendations:

- Contact Kyrgyzstani parliamentarians and **urge them to vote against the draft law, or at least to remove any mention of criminal penalties from the bill**
- Focus on expanding human rights and freedoms in programmes in Kyrgyzstan
- Provide financial support and resources to LGBTI organisations in Kyrgyzstan.

You can also reach out to daniyar@tgeu.org for help coordinating your response.

[Download position paper](#)

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