

Georgia Approves Bill Against Sexual Discrimination in First Reading

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The Georgian parliament has approved in a first reading a bill that seeks to better protect those facing harassment because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The bill, which was adopted by 110 votes to 40, will also prohibit discrimination of individuals and legal entities on the grounds of race, gender, nationality, age, and on the basis of several other criteria, news agency Civil.ge reported Friday.

Representatives of the ruling Georgian Dream coalition widely backed the bill, which was initiated by the government, though it was strongly opposed in some quarters.

Tbilisi mayoral candidate and opposition politician Dimitri Lortkipanidze said the bill's adoption was equivalent to "legalizing an immoral act." Orthodox priest David Isakadze called it "the legalization of sodomy."

The adoption of such an anti-discrimination bill was one of conditions laid forth by the European Union for the initiation of a visa-free regime between the EU and Georgia.

In contrast, Russia last year passed a bill banning the promotion of "gay-propaganda" to minors, in what many in the West see as a backwards step for gay rights in the country.

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