

Statement on the use of the abbreviation “LGBTI” concerning events in the Chechen Republic

We would like to express our recognition of the international community’s will to put an end to human rights violations in the Chechen Republic. We recognize the importance and significance of the work done to ensure the responsibility of those who involved in the alleged crimes committed. At the same time, we consider it essential to note that the report OSCE Rapporteur’s Report under the Moscow Mechanism on alleged Human Rights Violations and Impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation widely uses the abbreviation LGBTI, which was duplicated in a number of media statements.¹

We believe that the use of the letter “I” in the abbreviation “LGBTI” in intergovernmental and politically significant statements undoubtedly increases the awareness of the general public about the existence of the intersex community. However, our organization does not support the mention of intersex people in politically sensitive statements of international organizations when such remarks are accompanied by incorrect information.

According to the OSCE report, “LGBTI” are people with “homo- and transsexual orientation” (p.1 in the Table of Content, 13) and people with “non-heterosexual orientation,” (p. 4) which does not reflect accepted definitions of what does it mean to be an intersex person. Such formulations can create a false impression among the addressees of the report. Indeed, statistically, most intersex people are heterosexual because intersex features do not directly determine a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Such a mixture of concepts not only contributes to the dissemination of prejudices against intersex people but can also be dangerous when the addressee of such information is the authorities, known for their homophobic rhetoric.

Moreover, in the long run, this policy hides the particular problems of intersex people behind the agenda of LGBT people’s human rights situation. In this regard, we would like to note that the report doesn’t mention violations of the rights of intersex people in the Chechen Republic, the word “intersex,” or “sex characteristics” as the ground for discrimination (while there are references to prosecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity).

Therefore, we would like to call for the correct use of the LGBTI abbreviation and the providing of accurate information about intersex people in official documents addressed to politicians in post-Soviet states.

¹ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE Rapporteur’s Report under the Moscow Mechanism on alleged Human Rights Violations and Impunity in the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, 20 December 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/odihr/407402>