

Georgia: a call for change

An IGLYO Statement

On the 30th of April, Madona Kirapoidze set herself on fire in front of Tbilisi City Hall. Madona, a 19 years old trans woman and sex worker, was protesting the Georgian governments neglect of the trans community and sex workers. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Georgian trans community, and especially trans sex workers, are now left alone, without support and help from the government.

After having been rescued from her burning clothes, Madona Kiparoidze was heard saying to the police detaining her: 'I am a transgender woman, and I'm setting myself on fire because the Georgian state doesn't care about me.'

Mari Kurtanidze, IGLYO Board Member, confirms Madona's denouncement of the Georgian government's crisis response: 'The socio-economic impact of the pandemic especially affects those who belong to the most marginalised communities. In Georgia, **trans people** often work in the informal economy, **rely on sex work**, have precarious job positions, and **low incomes**. The crisis left them **without income** that is essential for survival. They are driven to starvation and face eviction because of inability to pay rent.'

Mari further adds that: 'It should be noted that this is a horrific story that requires us to be extremely cautious while sharing it. We do not want this tragic and desperate act to be perceived as an effective way of dealing with the situation. I want to emphasise that **self-harm should never have to be resorted as a way of protest** and we should do everything to avoid this kind of instances in the future.'

IGLYO calls upon the **Georgian government**, and others, to **adopt effective crisis measures** that are **inclusive** of the needs and realities of the LGBTQI youth and their communities. The failure to do so is likely to lead to the violation of the human rights of LGBTQI youth, i.e. the **right to life, housing, access to housing, and access to quality and affordable health care**.

We therefore join our voices to those of the Georgian queer community who **urge the Government of Georgia**:

- To provide assistance to LGBTQI+ people by **subsidizing apartment rent** or **offering shelter**;
- To take the needs of LGBTQI+ youth into account in the **COVID-19** anti-crisis plan and **provide** them with **appropriate assistance**; and
- To take the needs of **sex workers** into account in the COVID-19 anti-crisis plan and **provide** them with **appropriate assistance**.

In addition, we call for direct **solidarity with the Georgian trans community**. Please donate and share the emergency crowdfunding facilitated by **Trans Georgia**:

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