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**STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
FOR THE 54TH SESSION OF THE
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) was founded in 1998 and is a non-governmental organization dedicated to promoting and protecting human rights around the world. The ECLJ also holds Special Consultative status before the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This report discusses the status of human rights in the Republic of Lithuania (Lithuania) for the 54th session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

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Background

1. Lithuania is a country located in northeastern Europe and has a population of approximately 2.8 million people.¹ The population is predominantly Christian, with approximately 74.2% of the population identifying as Catholic, 14.8% as other, 6.1% belonging to no religion, 3.7% as Orthodox Christian, 0.6% as Evangelical Lutheran.²

2. Lithuania's last review was held on January 26, 2022.³ As a result of the review, Lithuania received 232 recommendations, 214 of which it accepted.⁴ It was recommended by Iceland, and supported by Lithuania, that the government "ensure the right to universal and safe access to sexual and reproductive health services".⁵ It was also recommended by Nepal, and supported by Lithuania, that the government "[c]ontinue its efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings."⁶ No recommendations were made regarding religious freedom. In our last report, we expressed concern over abortion in the country.

Legal Framework

Abortion

3. Under Article 19 of the Constitution of Lithuania, "[t]he right to life of a human being shall be protected by law."⁷ Further, under Article 38 of the Constitution, "[t]he family shall be the basis of society and the State. Family, motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood shall be under the protection and care of the State."⁸

4. Under Order No. 50 of 28 January 1994 of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius, On Procedures For Performing a Surgical Termination of Pregnancy:

Pregnancy may be terminated upon a woman's request up to 12 weeks, provided there are no contraindications to this surgery. Termination of a pregnancy beyond 12 weeks is permitted in cases when the pregnancy threatens the life and health of the woman.⁹

5. Further, under Article 1.6:

The written consent of one of the parents, foster parents, guardians, caregivers, or persons actually raising the child is mandatory in cases of a termination of pregnancy to be performed on a minor girl under the age of 16, and in the case of girls from the age of 16 to 18, the aforementioned consent is desirable. The person giving consent must present him/herself in person or his/her written consent must be certified by a notary.¹⁰

6. In January 2023, Lithuania legalized medical abortions, allowing for women to have an abortion through taking medication up until the ninth week of pregnancy.¹¹

7. Additionally, Lithuania is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹² Article 6 of the ICCPR states that “[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.”¹³ Furthermore, Lithuania has a responsibility to uphold pro-life principles enshrined in other international agreements such as the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development.

Human Trafficking

8. Under Article 48 of the Constitution of Lithuania:

Everyone may freely choose a job or business, and shall have the right to have proper, safe, and healthy conditions at work, as well as to receive fair pay for work and social security in the event of unemployment. The work of foreigners in the Republic of Lithuania shall be regulated by law.

Forced labour shall be prohibited.¹⁴

9. Under Article 147 of the Criminal Code of Lithuania:

A person who sells, buys or otherwise transfers or acquires, recruits, transports or holds a person captive by physical violence or threats, or by otherwise depriving him of the possibility to resist or by using the victim’s dependence or vulnerability, or by using deceit, or by taking or paying money, or by receiving or providing other benefits to a person who actually controls the victim, provided that the offender was aware or sought that the victim, whether he agreed or not, would be exploited under the conditions of slavery or under the conditions similar to slavery for prostitution, pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced marriage or marriage of convenience, forced labour or services, including begging, commission of a criminal act or for other exploitation purposes, shall be punished by a custodial sentence for a term of two up to ten years.¹⁵

10. Further, under Article 8 of the ICCPR, “[n]o one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited. No one shall be held in servitude.”¹⁶ Additionally, Lithuania is a party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.¹⁷ Under Article 9 sec. 1 of this Protocol:

1. States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures:

(a) To prevent and combat trafficking in persons; and

(b) To protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from revictimization.¹⁸

Abortion

11. In our last report on Lithuania, we discussed the serious harm abortions can have on women, both physically and mentally. Physically, abortion often results in infection, uterine piercing, bleeding, blood poisoning, infertility, increased risk of breast cancer, and the likelihood of a premature birth or miscarriage during the woman's next pregnancy, and even death.¹⁹ Psychologically, abortion often results in depression, guilt, shame, drug and alcohol addiction, low self-esteem, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.²⁰

12. During Lithuania's last review, a law was proposed that protects women and preborn babies through limiting abortion except in cases where continuing the pregnancy would endanger the life or health of the woman, or the pregnancy was a result of rape.²¹ Unfortunately, that legislation was rejected by the Lithuanian Parliament. Now, Lithuania has taken steps to expand abortion and further harm women and preborn babies by legalizing the "abortion pill," which is prescribed by a doctor.²²

13. Expanding abortion to include medical abortion via taking a pill will only cause more harm to women and kill more preborn babies. A medical abortion involves taking two pills, mifepristone and misoprostol. Mifepristone works by blocking the hormone necessary to maintain the uterine lining. The second pill, misoprostol, then causes the uterus to contract and expel the preborn baby. This process includes potentially severe medical complications for the woman, such as:

- an undetected ectopic pregnancy, which can be dangerous and is a medical emergency,
- blood clots remaining in the uterus,
- heavy bleeding,
- severe pain,
- fever,
- excessively heavy bleeding (defined as going through two or more pads within an hour span),
- strong-smelling vaginal discharge,
- passing clots for two or more hours that are larger than the size of a lemon.²³

14. Through legalizing the abortion pill, Lithuania has made it easier to have an abortion, which will further cause harm to women and preborn babies. It is also in violation of numerous international human rights agreements that have repeatedly affirmed the dignity of human life and require its protection. The UDHR requires "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family [as] the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."²⁴ It also provides that "[e]veryone has the right to life."²⁵ Similarly, the U.N. Charter recognizes and affirms the "dignity and worth of the human person."²⁶ The ICCPR also states that "[e]very human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life."²⁷ Additionally, by making it easier to obtain an abortion through the abortion pill, Lithuania is failing to uphold its obligation under the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development to "reduce the recourse to abortion"²⁸ and "take appropriate steps to help women avoid abortion, which in no case should be promoted as a method of family planning."²⁹

15. Additionally, we are concerned about the fact that Lithuania's abortion law only states that parental consent is "desirable" for girls between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. Allowing

for girls between the ages of sixteen and eighteen to obtain an abortion without parental consent undermines the rights of parents by excluding them from one of the most significant medical and moral decisions affecting their child. Parents are legally responsible for their child's health and well-being and are responsible for providing guidance and support. As demonstrated above, abortion can result in serious adverse health complications, and parents must be aware of what is happening to their child.

Human Trafficking

16. Lithuania primarily serves as a country of origin for human trafficking. Over recent years, however, it has increasingly become a country of destination also.³⁰ In fact, approximately 90% of identified human trafficking victims are Lithuanian citizens, and more than half of them are trafficked and exploited within the country.³¹ Further, approximately 45% of victims are sexually exploited, 29% are exploited for forced criminality, and 22% are exploited for labor.³²

17. It is estimated that 17,000 people are living in conditions of modern slavery in Lithuania. However, in 2025, authorities only initiated investigations into twenty-two human trafficking cases involving more than 100 victims and seventy-five suspects.³³ In 2024, authorities had twenty-six ongoing pre-trial investigations, representing a 23% increase from 2023.³⁴ Approximately half of these cases involved forced labor, while the remaining cases involved sexual exploitation and forced criminality, including begging and theft. During the same year, twelve individuals were convicted of human trafficking offenses, representing a 50% decrease in convictions compared to 2023.³⁵

18. Lithuania's low number of identified victims and convictions does not accurately reflect the true scope and the demographics of people affected by human trafficking. For example, the problem of trafficking for sexual exploitation is widespread throughout the European Union. However, of the seventeen investigations launched in 2024, only three were related to sex trafficking.³⁶

19. A major contributing reason to Lithuania's inability to combat human trafficking relative to the high number of victims is a lack of investigative capacity. Lithuania lacks dedicated human trafficking units both within its police force and in the prosecutor's office. Another reason that enforcement remains low is the reluctance of some victims to work with authorities. It is common for traffickers to threaten their victims if they report the crime to the police. Further, criminal trials require that victims recount their experiences, which can be extremely emotionally painful for victims to relive. Further, authorities lack specialized training to work with victims of human trafficking who are experiencing trauma. Dr. Erika Leonaitė, the Parliamentary Ombudsperson, has noted that, "[v]ictims are also reluctant to seek help due to fear of retaliation from traffickers, mistrust of authorities, feelings of shame, or lack of legal residency in the country."³⁷

20. Although Lithuania still has a long way to go to put a dent into the 17,000 victims of human trafficking, it does offer assistance to victims and witnesses of human trafficking by providing shelters, counseling, and legal aid. It also works with NGOs to provide critical counseling assistance.³⁸ In 2024, NGOs provided assistance to 107 new victims of human trafficking and continued providing assistance to 132 victims from previous years.³⁹ Along with the counseling services, the NGOs also provide support for reintegrating into society.⁴⁰

21. In addition to the direct assistance and work with NGOs, the government has conducted training for authorities, conducted awareness campaigns, and distributed information regarding human trafficking at both the national and municipal levels.⁴¹ Additionally, in 2024, the government adopted a national action plan to combat human trafficking for 2024-2026. This new national action plan has four main objectives: strengthening inter-institutional and international cooperation, increasing victim identification and assistance, and ensuring the effective implementation of preventive measures.⁴²

22. However, implementation of this national action plan has been inconsistent. According to Dr. Miliuviene, the Seimas Ombudsperson, almost one-third of municipalities in Lithuania chose not to implement measures to combat human trafficking because they do not perceive human trafficking to be a major problem.⁴³ If this is true, then unfortunately, the awareness campaigns discussed above are not working.

Recommendations

23. We urge Lithuania to reform its abortion laws and strengthen protections for preborn babies and women. Lithuania must do this by enacting legislation that recognizes the State's legitimate interest in protecting all life including preborn babies. We also ask that Lithuania establish a national hotline for pregnant women that provides support services, legal rights, healthcare resources, and emergency shelter. The hotline should operate 24/7 and be staffed by train professionals, and offer referrals to appropriate medical, social, and legal assistance to ensure timely support for women in crisis. This is important because as demonstrated above, abortion can result in serious harm to women and it is concerning that Lithuania has made it easier for women to have an abortion through legalizing the abortion pill.

24. We also ask that Lithuania partner with crisis pregnancy centers to provide women with the support and medical services they need to continue the pregnancy.

25. Additionally, we are concerned that Lithuania's abortion law only stated that parental consent for girls between the ages of sixteen and eighteen is desirable. Lithuania must reform its law to require parental consent for all girls below the age of eighteen. It is imperative that Lithuania uphold the rights enshrined in its Constitution and other international agreements to protect all human life.

26. We also ask Lithuania to adopt and report on standardized anti-trafficking measures, including victim identification protocols and awareness campaigns. Additionally, the government should implement referral procedures for identifying human trafficking victims. Progress should be measured through annual reporting on compliance, the number of personnel trained to identify human trafficking, and increases in victim identification and referrals. Additionally, as its education and awareness campaigns have proven ineffective, it should develop a comprehensive national anti-trafficking strategy that combines targeted outreach to vulnerable populations, increases funding for victim support services, and establishes stronger monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Additionally, the government should periodically publish progress reports on the implementation of the strategy.

¹ James H. Bater, *Lithuania*, BRITANNICA, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lithuania>.

² *Id.*

³ *Universal Periodic – Review*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/lt-index>.

⁴ *Infographic – Lithuania*, OHCHR, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/lt/2022-12-23/Lithuania.pdf>.

⁵ OHCHR, UPR of Lithuania (3rd Cycle – 40th Session) ¶138.47. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/upr/sessions/session40/lt/2022-09-19/UPR40_Lithuania_Thematic_List_of_Recommendations.doc.

⁶ *Id.* ¶137.66.

⁷ CONSTITUTION OF LITHUANIA art. 19, <https://www.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Constitution.htm>.

⁸ *Id.* art. 38.

⁹ Order No. 50 of 28 January 1994 of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania, Vilnius, On Procedures for Performing a Surgical Termination of Pregnancy, sec. 1.1, <https://reproductiverights.org/maps/provision/lithuanias-abortion-provisions/>.

¹⁰ *Id.* art. 1.6.

¹¹ Goda Malinauskaitė, “*Simpler and Safer*”: *Medical Abortion Becomes Legal in Lithuania*, LRT (Jan. 2, 2023), <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1857115/simpler-and-safer-medical-abortion-becomes-legal-in-lithuania>.

¹² *Ratification Status for Lithuania*, OHCHR, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=101&Lang=EN.

¹³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 6, Dec. 16, 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights> [hereinafter ICCPR].

¹⁴ CONSTITUTION OF LITHUANIA art. 48, *supra* note 7.

¹⁵ LAW ON THE APPROVAL AND ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE CRIMINAL CODE art. 147, https://vatesi.lrv.lt/public/canonical/1697012277/1045/Criminal_Code.pdf?__cf_chl_tk=da8Wn9X4y_31WTAhf5f5LB8pakWNXT6yVEmKE3nhukM-1779888126-1.0.1.1-88EETqGfgOZxJliU1j_5wBa1dwXL96I4IMZMhqBlbWo.

¹⁶ ICCPR art. 8, *supra* note 13.

¹⁷ *Chapter XVIII Penal Matters 12. A Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*, U.N. TREATY COLLECTION, https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-12-a&chapter=18.

¹⁸ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime art. 9 § 1, Nov. 15, 2000, G.A. Res. 55/25, U.N. Doc. A/RES/55/25, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

¹⁹ *What are the Possible Consequences of Terminating Pregnancy?* KRIZINIO NESTUMO CENTRAS, <https://krizinionestumocentras.lt/en/pagalba/apie-nestumo-nutraukimo-kokios-galimos-nestumo-nutraukimo-pasekmes>.

²⁰ Priscilla K. Coleman, *Women Who Suffered Emotionally from Abortion: A Qualitative Synthesis of Their Experiences*, 2(4) J. OF AM. PHYSICIANS & SURGEONS, 116-117 (2017), <https://www.jpands.org/vol22no4/coleman.pdf>.

²¹ *Abortion Law in Lithuania – Liberal Law is Constantly at Stake*, BNT, <https://www.bnt.eu/et/uudised/aktualsed-oigusteemad/2900-abortion-law-in-lithuania-liberal-law-is-constantly-at-stake>.

²² Goda Malinauskaitė, “*Simpler and Safer*”: *Medical Abortion Becomes Legal in Lithuania*, LRT (Jan. 2, 2023), <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1857115/simpler-and-safer-medical-abortion-?>.

²³ *Abortion Pill: What is a Medical Abortion*, HEALTHLINE, <https://www.healthline.com/health/abortion-pill>.

²⁴ G.A. Res. 217 (III) A, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, pmbl. (Dec. 10, 1948), <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

²⁵ *Id.* art. 3 (emphasis added).

²⁶ U.N. Charter pmbl., <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text>

²⁷ ICCPR art. 6, *supra* note 13.

²⁸ International Conference on Population and Development, *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development*, ¶ 8.25, U.N. Doc. A/CONF/F.171/13/Rev. 1, https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/a_conf.171_13_rev.1.pdf

²⁹ *Id.* ¶7.24 (emphasis added).

³⁰ GRETA Publishes its Third Report on Lithuania, COUNCIL OF EUROPE (Feb. 28, 2024), <https://www.coe.int/en/web/anti-human-trafficking/-/greta-publishes-its-third-report-on-lithuania>.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

³³ *New Report on the Situation Regarding Countering Human Trafficking in Lithuania*, PARLIAMENTARY OMBUDSPERSONS OF LITHUANIA (Aug. 8, 2025), <https://www.lrski.lt/en/naujienos/new-report-on-the-situation-regarding-combatting-human-trafficking-in-lithuania/>.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Lithuania*, GLOBAL ORGANIZED CRIME INDEX, <https://ocindex.net/country/lithuania>.

³⁹ *New Report on the Situation Regarding Countering Human Trafficking in Lithuania*, *supra* note 33.

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *The International Dimension of the EU Policy to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and Protect the Victims of This Crime. Lithuania Report*, IOM (2024), https://www.emn.lt/uploads/Products/product_2091/IOM_trafficking_EN.pdf.

⁴³ *New Report on the Situation Regarding Countering Human Trafficking in Lithuania*, *supra* note 33.