

Cardiff UCU motion on Kazakhstan LGBTQ+ rights and freedoms

Cardiff UCU notes:

1. A new law passed in Kazakhstan on 30 December 2025 prohibits public dissemination of information promoting "non-traditional sexual orientations." It limits public discussion or positive representation of LGBTQ+ topics.
2. Another law passed on the same date on crime prevention gives power to register volunteers as "public assistants" who may legally use physical force – which could be used to give legality to homophobic assault.
3. Decisions about which staff in which Schools would work in Cardiff University Kazakhstan (CUK) have been made while the threat of compulsory redundancy was active.

Cardiff UCU believes:

1. The new law presents a number of risks, including:
 - a. The possibility of a surge in homophobic and transphobic violence in Kazakhstan, as happened in Russia after a comparable law was passed in 2013.
 - b. Any teaching staff in Kazakhstan risking being reported for teaching materials or conversations that include neutral, positive or even factual content about LGBTQ+ identities.
 - c. Queer or trans staff working in Kazakhstan and having to closet themselves or risk breaking the law.
 - d. Queer or trans staff being forced to disclose their sexuality or gender identity to a line manager at Cardiff in trying to opt out of working in Kazakhstan.
 - e. Detriment to career for any staff opting out of TNE due to concerns about the above.
 - f. New applicants being discriminated against because their sexual orientation or gender identity places them at risk for teaching in Kazakhstan.
 - g. The safety of both staff and students on the Astana campus under these new laws, with a lack of information on staff and student support and legal advice from university management.
2. State repression of sexual and gender minority rights is growing both within the UK and globally.
3. We should avoid quasi-colonial framings of Kazakhstan as an inferior society (in need of supposed 'civilising'), or as exceptionally or uniformly dangerous, due to its anti-LGBTQ+ law.
4. The Kazakhstan campus is a neoliberal project with colonial elements in its extraction of value from a post-Soviet society, yet it may also potentially offer freedom and opportunities to queer or trans Kazakh youth.

5. The active threat of compulsory redundancies (up to Dec 2025), with earmarking staff to teach at Cardiff University Kazakhstan (CUK) being one route to being taken out of scope, means Cardiff University (CU) staff's decisions to work at CUK were coerced and not voluntary.

Cardiff UCU resolves:

1. To demand CU and CUK management to state in detail how it will protect its staff and students in the light of the above risks; and to scrutinise CU and CUK managements' plans until satisfied with them.
2. To urge CU and CUK to provide robust and confidential pastoral support, including counselling and therapy, to CUK students and staff.
3. To seek, and to encourage CU and CUK to seek, opportunities to promote queer & trans freedoms in Kazakhstan in partnership with local, grassroots groups.
4. To liaise with Cardiff UCU members who have been asked, or have agreed, to work at CUK.
5. To contact UCU branches at De Montfort University and Coventry University, which also have Kazakhstan campuses, to share concerns and ideas.