



Annual Review

of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Tajikistan covering the period of January to December 2018

Tajikistan

Asylum

In 2017, a gay man left Tajikistan and applied for asylum in Germany. In February this year, he published a video about life for LGBT people in Tajikistan and his own personal struggles. He called his home country “hell for LGBT people”. After the [video](#) went public, the police harassed his family back home and he received threats from some family members. His asylum claim has been refused by German authorities and he is in the appeals process.

Employment

Many LGBT people face discrimination when trying to find a job and end up leaving Tajikistan for economic reasons. Most of them head to Russia or Kazakhstan in hope for work and a better life. Trans people are particularly affected by unemployment, and many take up sex work in Russia.

Family

Many LGBT people hide their sexual orientation and gender identity at home, due to stigma and discrimination. Although some do receive support when coming out to their families, others have reported having to leave home.

Some have been forced by their parents to get married, to avoid shaming from other family members.

Health

Following the decision of the Ministry of Health, the Republican AIDS Center and other NGOs in 2016, the National Program on HIV Prevention and Treatment (2017-2020) excludes men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans people from its scope. The Program was signed by the President, but under the radar. The Global Fund was informed of the exclusion and as a key funder, obliged the government to remedy this or its funding will end. Following this intervention and a meeting between LGBT NGOs and the government, a sub-document to the Program was adopted, explicitly including MSM and trans people as key populations. This document is much weaker than the National Program.

The Global Fund has been funding the provision of free antiretroviral treatment (ART) for everyone living with HIV, including LGBT people. In 2018, the Global Fund began

distributing better quality lubricants than before. Condoms however are still not of good quality or suitable for anal sex.

Many trans people reportedly go to Russia to access hormones and gender affirming surgeries, in lack of access in Tajikistan.

Human rights defenders

LGBT human rights defenders cannot openly discuss LGBT issues at the national level. Advocacy work is mostly done at the international level, as the government and the police routinely harass LGBT people.

Legal gender recognition

By law, trans people have the right to change their gender markers in documents. Although the law references medical requirements, these are unclear. In 2018 two trans people have been able to change their gender marker, but the procedure is entirely ad hoc.

Participation in public, cultural and political life

LGBT communities host cultural events, such as fashion shows or art events. Visible political participation however is limited due to stigma and discrimination.

Police and law enforcement

In 2017, the international NGO International Partnership of Human Rights published the report [“We just want to be who we are: LGBT people in Tajikistan: beaten, raped and exploited by police”](#). The report documents dozens of cases where LGBT were intimidated, arbitrarily detained, physically or sexually abused or threatened by the police, with almost complete impunity. When LGBT people tried to report these cases, they were further threatened by police.

NGOs have also reported that the police routinely uses dating apps to get information about LGBT people and organises raids at cruising places, despite same-sex relations having been decriminalised since 1998. The police blackmails LGBT people and extort money from them. Between 2016-2018, LGBT NGOs provided legal support to 65 LGBT people and filed complaints about police misconduct.

Public opinion

Stigma, prejudice, and intolerance towards LGBT people remain the norm, especially among those who are religious. A growing number of Tajik people however become informed about LGBT issues and support LGBT people.

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