



# TURKMENISTAN

## ASYLUM

Asylum remains one of the most urgent needs for the LGBTI community in Turkmenistan.

## DATA COLLECTION

In Turkmenistan, the state exerts strict control over media and heavily monitors internet activity, with journalists facing arrest for attempting to exercise freedom of expression. The only documented research on LGBTI issues was conducted in 2019. Collecting data remains almost impossible due to the significant safety risks it poses.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

A report by Amnesty International unveiled systemic discrimination against LGBTI people in Turkmenistan. The report underscored how the Turkmen government, under the pretext of upholding national culture, perpetuates significant oppression against sexual minorities.

Despite recommendations by international bodies like the UN Human Rights Committee, consensual same-sex relations continue to be criminalised in Turkmenistan. Despite previous indications of reform, a new version of the Criminal Code in April 2022 not only kept the “sodomy” provisions but increased both the severity and scope of punishments.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Torture and inhumane treatment remain present throughout the country. In many instances, relatives have reported that LGBTI people were subjected to torture and violence by law enforcement authorities, and several public cases of LGBTI people being forced to flee from the country to seek safety were recorded.

## HEALTH

Reports indicate that the Ministry of National Security is collaborating with regional AIDS centres, meaning that data of the people who are tested for HIV, including LGBTI people, is shared with the authorities, which means a risk of criminal prosecution for a same-sex act. Such collaboration often entails requesting information about individuals seeking treatment for HIV/AIDS, which is then used to target and arrest members of the LGBTI community.

## HOUSING

Reports indicate that the Housing Department might be involved in investigations targeting LGBTI people. According to the findings, authorities engage in the collection of information

on residents, especially if only young men live together, and in questioning neighbors about visitors before the police conduct surprise raids.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Amnesty International reported that the government’s refusal to acknowledge and address discrimination against LGBTI people and women underscores a troubling disregard for international human rights standards.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights advocacy is heavily restricted, with international human rights defenders being barred, unregistered organisations deemed illegal and substantial hardships in registering rights groups.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Turkmenistan has no legally approved procedure for medical or legal transition for trans people.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In July, Radio Azatlyk released the documentary “Invisible Rainbow of Turkmenistan,” spotlighting the activism of David Omarov, the first openly gay advocate for LGBTI rights in Turkmenistan.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Without formal channels for complaints, LGBTI individuals face significant barriers in seeking justice. Complaints require personal details that many fear will lead to further harassment.

Law enforcement agencies sometimes exploit dating apps to extort money from victims or coerce them into providing information about others. Those who do not cooperate face severe penalties, including physical abuse and forced medical examinations.

In Turkmenabad, Lebap province, police raids of private homes and businesses have targeted sex workers and members of the LGBTI community as part of a campaign to “ensure public order and maintain morality.” Police forces often conduct surprise raids, scrutinising mobile phone apps and investigating contacts with known LGBTI activists or human rights organisations to identify members of the LGBTI community.

In early July, following the release of the documentary ‘Invisible Rainbow of Turkmenistan’, authorities ramped up efforts to identify LGBTI people, including organised raids. (See also under Participation in Public, Cultural, and Political Life)

## PUBLIC OPINION

The topic of same-sex relations remains a taboo subject in media and education, preventing any formal acknowledgment or protection of LGBTI rights.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Criminal Code of 1997 bans same-sex sexual relations, categorising 'sodomy' as a criminal offense. The law carries a maximum punishment of two years in prison and targets only men.

Since the 2022 power transition, reproductive rights have notably declined, with police intimidation and legislative changes making abortion virtually inaccessible.



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