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By [RFE/RL's Radio Farda](#)

Tehran Tells Transgender People To Avoid 'Busy' Areas, Highlighting Difficulties Faced By LGBT Community



Most members of Iran's LGBT community are forced to hide their sexual orientation, often leading double lives due to fear of persecution by the hard-line leadership and a society that views them as diseased.

The Tehran City Council spokesman said that transgender people should congregate in only certain parts of Iran's capital, highlighting how many in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community are shunned.

Speaking at a [press briefing](#) on March 4, Alireza Nadali said transgender people should avoid areas such as the bustling Valiasr Intersection -- a focal point in Tehran for both its cultural significance and as a site of major public gatherings, including protests -- and instead meet up in "inclusive" areas.

"We're not sweeping the issue under the rug. There should be an inclusive space for them, just not in this busy area," Nadali said.

Most members of Iran's LGBT community are forced to hide their sexual orientation, often leading double lives due to fear of persecution by the hard-line leadership and a society that views them as diseased.

Nadali referred to transgender people as having "a special physical and psychological condition," further underscoring the institutional challenges faced by the LGBT community in Iran.

The comments come less than two months after a father admitted to murdering his 17-year-old son over what he called the teenager's "feminine" behavior and makeup. The father added that he felt publicly shamed and claimed, "everyone pointed fingers at us."

Violence against sexual minorities by family members is not uncommon in the Islamic republic, where senior officials often address them with derogatory terms, such as "inhuman" or "sick," fanning homophobic sentiment.

The Tehran City Council's moves to push transgender people to find certain areas to meet up aligns with broader efforts by the city and other government bodies to regulate public spaces and control social conduct.

Tehran recently erected barriers around the City Theater -- one of the areas transgender people should avoid, according to the City Council -- and has increased patrols by hijab enforcement officers in the area after more than a year of unrest sparked by Iranians' anger over a lack of freedoms and rights.

Despite the legality of sex-reassignment surgery in Iran -- a country that otherwise criminalizes same-sex relations with severe penalties including corporal punishment and death -- the official stance towards transgender individuals remains fraught with contradictions.

Authorities provide legal mechanisms for gender transition while simultaneously restricting the visibility and rights of transgender people in public life.

Meanwhile, religious leaders in Iran have issued varying fatwas regarding gender reassignment surgery -- while some clerics do not consider it haram, or forbidden -- creating an even more complex landscape for transgender rights and acceptance in the country.

According to a 2020 poll published by the 6rang advocacy group, 62 percent of LGBT members surveyed in Iran said that they had experienced one or more forms of violence by their immediate family. Nearly 30 percent complained of sexual violence, while 77 percent said they had been subjected to physical violence.

The pressure and persecution force many members of Iran's LGBT community to flee the country, while many others undergo sex-reassignment surgery (SRS). Iran is the only Islamic country where SRS is recognized.

Written by Ardeshir Tayebi based on an original story in Persian by RFE/RL's Radio Farda

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