How official anti-LGBTI hate speech is directly translating into hate crime across Europe

Blog, Safety, Annual Review, Bias-motivated Speech, Bias-motivated Violence

> ILGA-Europe's Annual Review identifies a sharp rise in anti-LGBTI hate-speech across the European region, often carried out by public figures. To mark European Day for Victims of Crime (February 22), we report on the ways in which such rhetoric is in turn violently affecting the lives LGBTI people.

Throughout 2019, there was sharp increase in physical attacks on LGBTI people across the European region, many of the latter premeditated and brutal. There was also an increase in attacks on LGBTI centres and gatherings. This isn't only in countries where official hate-speech is on the rise, like Poland, Romania or Spain. **An increase of hate crimes against LGBTI people is a pan-European phenomenon** we have identified in our Annual Review 2020, which analyses trends and developments in the human rights situation of LGBTI people across 54 countries.

Brexit, for instance, and the populist narrative surrounding it, can be linked an increase in anti-LGBTI hate crimes and incidents in England and Wales from 5,807 in 2014–15, to 13,530 in 2018–19. The banning of events in Armenia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Turkey, and the prosecution of participants in Pride events in the latter, add to an atmosphere lacking in a sense of safety. In the Polish city of Lublin, a couple was arrested for bringing an explosive device to the Pride march.

There has also been the growing presence of anti-LGBTI, anti-gender and neo-Nazi protesters in public spaces during events such as Pride parades and film screenings. In several cities LGBTI centres were targeted with graffiti and other such attacks.

To mark European Day for Victims of Crime (February 22), here are examples of the many hate crimes documented in 2019, across the region:

Albania

On 12 November, a homeless trans woman who participated in the Dyke March, was brutally attacked by five men. The President of Albania condemned such "cowardly acts" and asked for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

Armenia

On 20 June, 11 LGBT activists were verbally abused by four men in a park in Yerevan. The victims called the police, who told the activists to leave the park and took the four men to the police station. The investigation is ongoing.

Azerbaijan

Hate crimes against the LGBT community continued to be a serious issue in 2019. On 1 April, at least eight gay men and trans sex workers were detained by the police in Baku, signaling a new wave of arrests of LGBTQ people.

On 2 April, a gay sex worker became a victim of extortion, theft, and blackmail in Baku and the perpetrator was detained. On 28 June, five trans women were physically assaulted by a group of 15 on a beach in Mardakan, four of the attackers have been arrested. On 6 July, a trans person was attacked outside a club while waiting for a taxi. The case was not reported to the police. In September, a gay man was beaten, harassed, and expelled from his village by his family for “dishonouring” them. The man reported the violence and a rape he was victim of last year.

Belarus

On 24 August, filmmaker Nikolai Kuprich and two friends were beaten up in a homophobic attack in Minsk.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 2 February, a lesbian couple was verbally assaulted and threatened with a knife and three days later were physically attacked by the same man and his friends. The violence was presumed to be linked to heightened homophobia ahead of the country’s first Pride march.

Bulgaria

Examples of documented hate crime include physical assault against two lesbians in January and February, and two gay men in Plovdid and in Varna. Five attacks were carried out against the LGBTI community centre, Rainbow Hub in the spring.

Cyprus

In February, a gay man was attacked in Nicosia. Despite multiple witnesses, the police failed to establish it was a hate crime. Another gay man was attacked by three men in a cruising area in Nicosia on 24 June. The case was reported to the police, who failed to take action.

Georgia

In June, renowned homophobe and public figure Levan Vasadze announced that self-organised groups, equipped with wooden clubs, would patrol Tbilisi to prevent Pride events. The Ministry of Interior stated that calling for the creation of such groups is illegal. However, no legal action was taken.

Greece

On 11 March, the building housing the Checkpoint Prevention and Examination Centers was targeted by a homophobic arson attack. The Checkpoints provide free HIV testing to vulnerable groups. On 2 September, two gay men were verbally harassed and physically assaulted by police officers.

Hungary

In March, Mi Hazánk live-streamed the disruption of a discussion on LGBTQI Roma people in Szeged. A day after Budapest Pride Festival opened extremists posted “Stop the Fag Propaganda” stickers outside the Auróra community space, Budapest Pride’s headquarters. Similar attacks were carried out in June, September and October. A participant of this year’s Budapest Pride March was spat on and kicked in the stomach after the event. In August, a girl was beaten up in Bényе for carrying a rainbow bag.

Iceland

In June, Candice Aþena was on her way home in Reykjavík when the men approached her, and after realising she was trans, kicked her in the face. This is not the first time Candice has been harassed.

Italy

Numerous hate crimes against LGBT people were documented in 2019, including two murders in May and June.

Luxembourg

Jean-Baptiste Pouthas, a French gay man was attacked in the Gare district of Luxembourg after a Pride party in July. Despite calling out for help, none of the passerby came to his rescue.

Montenegro

On 28 August, a trans man was attacked in Kolašin. The attackers went to the man's house and when he answered the door, beat, insulted and humiliated him until he lost consciousness. The case was reported and police have arrested three suspects.

Portugal

In February, a lesbian couple was verbally and physically assaulted in Costa da Caparica. The couple called the police, who failed to show up. In July, a young trans man was targeted by physical and verbal violence in Coimbra, twice within a few days. The attack was reported to the police. In September, a gay couple was verbally and physically assaulted in downtown Lisbon. The police were nearby and identified the perpetrators, but let them go.

Romania

Two trans women were sexually and verbally harassed, and later physically assaulted on 8 June in Sibiu. The women were approached by a man in a club, who later physically assaulted them in a second club. No one intervened to defend the women, while they were being beaten. They fought back and reported the violence. The case is currently pending, the victims have not heard back from the police

Russia

Hate crimes against LGBTI people, including murder, physical violence and extortion were committed again this year. The authorities failed to classify them as anti-LGBTI hate crimes. In February, a court in Tatarstan sentenced a man to one year in prison for physically attacking a teenager who he thought was gay.

Serbia

Belgrade's Pride Information Centre was attacked four times since December 2018. Although the police were informed of the possibility of one of the attacks in October, they did nothing to prevent it. On 24 June, a lesbian couple was harassed at the Engineering Students' Club (KST). The security staff refused to protect them, saying they were to blame and should not have kissed.

Slovenia

On the morning of 1 November, one of Slovenia's few LGBTI spaces, Tiffany Club in Ljubljana, was violently attacked by a group. In October, a gay man was beaten up in Murska Sobota.

Spain

A trans sex worker was brutally murdered by a client in Avilés on 21 September. Gay men were verbally harassed, threatened and assulted in Barcelona, Tenerife, and Valencia. On 19 December, politician Ángel Vázquez suffered a homophobic attack in Burjassot.

Switzerland

An increasing number of violent incidents, primarily against gay men, were reported this year, including an attack against an information stand at IDAHOT, May 17, and a gay couple being attacked on their way home from Pride in June. Both cases happened in Zurich.

Turkey

Several trans woman were victims of murder this year. Hande ?eker was murdered by a police officer in Izmir on 9 January; Gokce Saygi was killed in her home in Antalya in May; Defne was killed in her house in Afyonkarahisar in June. Court cases are ongoing. A group of trans women were attacked in a park in Antep in June and were then detained and verbally abused by police officers.

United Kingdom

On 30 May, a female couple was attacked by a group of men in London. The case went viral after the victims posted a picture of their injuries. London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, and then Prime Minister Theresa May condemned the attack.