

Seeking justice and dignity for Uzbekistan’s LBQT women

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Highlighting the hidden struggles of LBQT women in Uzbekistan amid calls for decriminalisation

Trigger warning: This story includes descriptions of torture and violence.

As the global community marks the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, the hidden struggles of LBQT women in Uzbekistan bring forward urgent calls for decriminalisation and systemic change. Uzbek activists, working tirelessly to amplify these voices, underscore that criminalisation of LGBT identities and strict patriarchal norms create conditions of unchecked violence and discrimination for lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, who face isolation and danger within their own communities and families.

Among these stories of courage is that of Dinora (name changed), a transgender woman who has endured years of persecution and hardship. Detained under Article 120—a law criminalising “sodomy”—Dinora was tortured for simply living authentically. Her experience reflects the resilience demanded of Uzbekistan’s LBQT women. Despite her trauma, Dinora continues to advocate quietly, offering support to others in need.

Similarly, Gulnora, Zilola, and Manzura (names changed) navigate a society that views their identities as threats to family honour. Gulnora faced intense guilt and rejection, trapped between her true self and the societal expectations forced upon her by her family. Zilola, caught expressing affection for another woman, was forced into marriage and subjected to humiliating rituals to “cure” her. Manzura, who found some support within a loving relationship, still faces violent consequences from family members whenever her sexual orientation is revealed. Their lives embody the immense toll of societal and familial pressures, yet each woman has found ways to stand strong in the face of ongoing abuse.

Culture of impunity

The criminalisation of same-sex relations among men promotes a culture of impunity, embedding harmful stereotypes that target all LGBTI people. For LBQT women, especially, rigid gender expectations amplify their suffering, leaving them trapped between cultural norms and a legal system offering no recourse or protection. These women’s stories illustrate not only the isolation they face but also the extraordinary courage required to pursue dignity and self-acceptance.

As we share these voices during the 16 Days of Activism, we are reminded that the fight against gender-based violence must be inclusive of all women, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Real justice and dignity for LBQT women in Uzbekistan demand urgent legal reform: the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships and protections for sexual orientation and gender identity within domestic violence laws.

For Dinora, Gulnora, Zilola, Manzura, and countless others, we must continue to call for a world where they can live freely and safely, without fear of persecution. Their courage in sharing these stories is a testament to resilience—a resilience that we hope will inspire lasting change.

For more on the experiences of LGBT people in Uzbekistan and the urgent call for decriminalisation, read the full report in [English](#).