



# Turkmenistan

## ASYLUM

Throughout the year, travel bans and restrictions on freedom of movement continued to be recorded in Turkmenistan, with authorities systematically restricting citizens – including LGBTI people, activists, and HIV-positive people – from leaving the country.

In August, reports emerged of the case of a 30-year-old gay man living with HIV who fled Turkmenistan in 2018 to escape persecution. Since then, he has been residing in a European territory, where he recently lost both his job and access to antiviral treatment. Because his passport has expired, he cannot leave his current location, and renewal would require returning to Turkmenistan, where homosexuality is criminalised and punishable by imprisonment. Human rights organisations have confirmed that LGBTI people and people living with HIV in Turkmenistan are routinely targeted, imprisoned, tortured, and often "disappeared" within the prison system. At the same time, they also warned that deportation to Turkmenistan would expose him to immediate risks of imprisonment, torture, and denial of medical care.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In July, David Omarov, founder of the "Invisible Rainbow Turkmenistan" initiative, released a video address to UN agencies, EU institutions, diplomatic missions, and international experts, urging recognition of systemic repression, violence, torture, and the erasure of LGBTI people in Turkmenistan. He called for acknowledgment of the harm enabled by Articles 133 and 116 of the Criminal Code and stressed that state bodies carry out abuses; officials publicly deny these realities in international forums.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In 2025, Turkmenistan remained de facto closed to international human rights NGOs, UN special procedures, and independent media. Combined with pervasive internal censorship, this near-total isolation severely restricted international oversight and made independent information-gathering extremely difficult.

## HEALTH

In 2025, reports indicated a lack of reliable access to HIV treatment inside Turkmenistan, including inconsistent availability of necessary medications and instances in which detainees were denied treatment.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, during its 82nd session, the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) reviewed Turkmenistan's third periodic report. The Committee expressed concern over the treatment of prisoners, highlighting enforced disappearances, prolonged solitary confinement, lack of legal and medical safeguards, absence of independent monitoring, and failures to investigate or prosecute torture and ill-treatment. It also denounced Turkmenistan's restrictive abortion laws, warning that the five-week legal limit, high costs, and limited contraception access force women into unsafe practices. The Committee further criticised the criminalisation of homosexuality and reports of police abuse against LGBTI persons, urging immediate steps to safeguard their rights.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2025, enforced disappearances within Turkmenistan's prison system remained a grave concern. The 2025 review by the Committee Against Torture highlighted ongoing cases of disappearances and the absence of independent monitoring mechanisms, leaving detainees in consistently life-threatening conditions.

Throughout the year, the Ministry of National Security maintained control over the country's central internet gateway and officials blocked a wide range of websites and major social media platforms they deemed sensitive, including most VPN services used to bypass state restrictions. Reports also indicated that security services summoned some individuals who used VPNs to question them about their online behaviour. Phone inspections remained common practice, with officers routinely checking devices for messages and photos, and conducting entrapment operations as part of broader surveillance efforts.

In September, new cases of torture and mistreatment of LGBTI detainees by Turkmenistan's prison authorities following their arrests and imprisonment were reported. The report also included allegations of abuse against prisoners living with HIV. It further noted that UN bodies and NGOs have repeatedly documented the use of forced anal examinations by Turkmen authorities in an attempt to "prove" same-sex activity.

In September, two survivors who escaped Turkmenistan publicly recounted their experiences of abuse. One man stated that he had been arrested on suspicion of homosexuality, tried behind closed doors, and given a two-year prison sentence for "sodomy." He described being repeatedly beaten by police and raped by other inmates during his imprisonment, which drove him to attempt suicide. The second survivor recalled being detained in 2019, during which security officers tortured him to compel him to disclose the names of other gay men. He reported that interrogators beat him while wearing gloves – telling him it was "to avoid touching [his] blood" – and that he was sexually assaulted while in custody.

In October, it was reported that Turkmenistan's police and Ministry of National Security had intensified a coordinated campaign targeting LGBTI people. In Turkmenabad, authorities were allegedly focusing on teenagers first, using them to identify older and wealthier LGBTI people. A local resident reported that two boys aged 15-16 were located and tortured, though no charges were filed. Though not formally charged, their detention led to the identification and targeting of approximately 20 other young men. Parallel raids occurred in Ashgabat. One detainee, a 20-year-old man, was said to have been held naked for ten days in the basement of the "sixth department," beaten, and pressured into informing on others after officials reviewed his family's financial situation and concluded he was not wealthy.