



# Azerbaijan

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

A young gay couple shared a post of themselves on [Valentine's Day](#), which quickly went viral. The couple received multiple death threats and some people offered to pay money for their murder. The couple contacted the police, who [refused](#) to help them or start an investigation. The couple had to go into hiding and plan to move from their town.

Hate speech was rampant after the Women's Day [rally](#) in March (see under **Freedom of assembly**). Dozens of hostile articles were written, [calling](#) the rally an "attack on national and religious values and the institution of the family"; saying it was "propagating prostitution and LGBT rights in the name of feminism"; or calling calling the participants "immoral AIDS viruses in the streets of Baku".

A media outlet tried to discredit Rabiyya Mammadova, an independent candidate in the 2019 municipality elections, claiming that she was a member and defender of sexual minorities.

In [May](#), members of the Azerbaijani opposition, the National Council of Democratic Forces (NCDF) made homophobic statements in a meeting that was leaked online. Members of the NCDF scolded Ismail Djalilov, an Azerbaijani journalist living in the US, for being openly gay. Rafik Manafli, a board member of the Civil Unity Party, said that "it's a pity that Hitler did not wipe out all gays in his time". Nafas LGBT Azerbaijan Alliance, Minority Azerbaijan and AZAD LGBT Collective released a [joint statement](#) condemning this hateful rhetoric by the country's political leadership.

In May, Sabir Rustamkhanli, MP of the Civic Solidarity Party (VHP) [compared](#) being LGBTQI to an "incurable disease".

Shaig Kalbiyev, a gay activist of Gender and Development, died in the armed conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between Azerbaijan and Armenia. Tural Museyibov, previously press representative of the State Maritime Agency, [said](#) on social media:

"What a shit an LGBT person that dares to go and protect our land? Why do you remember them with such respect? It's so insignificant to remember them. You could find a normal source, type, person to compare. [...] Do not equate them with our heroic martyrs." The hateful statement caused national debate, with many public figures standing up for Kalbiyev. As a response, Museyibov made a video of Kalbiyev's brother alleging that his brother was not gay.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes against the LGBT community continued to be a serious issue this year. In May, two gay men were [attacked](#) in Baku. The police did not investigate.

On [June 18](#), Aysu Mammadli, a trans woman and sex worker, was stabbed to death in Baku by an alleged client. A criminal case was opened under Article 120.1 of the Criminal Code on premeditated murder. One day later, another trans woman was [stabbed](#) in Baku, but managed to escape.

Sevgia-Subkhani Ismayilova (18) was [subjected](#) to family violence after coming out to her mother. Ismayilova was studying in Russia, and was forcibly brought back to Azerbaijan by her family in January. She said her family "chained her like a dog for three days". Ismayilova was later [taken](#) to a shelter in Baku.

The police detained a group of trans people in July, alleging that they were promoting drug use on their TikTok account. The police [shared](#) their testimony, which was then streamed on state media, in an attempt to discredit LGBTIQ people and create a negative public image.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On 8 March, activists [held](#) a march to mark International Women's Day in Baku, under the slogan: "March 8 - the streets are free for us". The organisers urged the government to ensure equal rights for all without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, including in employment and education. They also reminded the government of its obligations under the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). At least 10 participants were detained (see more under **Bias-motivated speech**).

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

[QueeRadar](#), a platform to identify, fight, and make anti-LGBTIQ+ attacks visible in the media, and to improve media representation, was launched in May. On 23 July, it released its first [report](#) on hate speech towards LGBTIQ+ people in the media between 2017 and 2019. QueeRadar also held a workshop for journalists.

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

On 26 March, the Baku Main Police Office shared that it [detained](#) a number of sex workers and "sexual minorities" in Sabunchu. Those allegedly belonging to sexual minorities were subjected to medical examinations.

## HEALTH

On 30 July, a trans woman with multiple stab wounds was denied appropriate medical help, and had to leave hospital while still bleeding.

In October a 21 year-old trans person, passed away due to a lack of appropriate medical treatment for her TB, Hepatitis C, and related health issues. Ayan was rejected by her family as a young person, and had worked as a sex worker since she was 13. Over the years she faced arbitrary arrests, discrimination, and homelessness because of her gender identity.

## HOUSING

Strict quarantine restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 crisis had a dramatic impact on LGBTIQ+ people, particularly trans sex workers who lost their income for several months. Many could not pay their rent and had to leave their homes.

*“... now, during the pandemic, we are nearly starving. Regulations only allow you to go outside for two hours and even then, you must gain permission via SMS. This isn't nearly enough time to find even one client. Now our landlord is trying to evict us. Even in normal times, we change houses nine to ten times a year, none of us have permanent accommodation, but now the pandemic has really shaken us” - Testimony to [IWPR](#)*

On 18 September, a trans woman was threatened with eviction due to her gender identity. The case was reported to the Ombudsman's office.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In March, LGBTI organisations Nafas and Minority Azerbaijan were hacked online, in what seems to have been an attack by the authorities. Some of their members were also targeted after they participated in the Women's Day March in Baku. Minority Azerbaijan and Nafas managed to regain access to their accounts, but the latter lost all their content since 2012.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

On 28 February, Chai Khana, a multimedia platform on the South Caucasus celebrated its five-year anniversary and included a special photo exhibition on LGBTIQ+s people in the region. In April, Mavi (Blue) Thought Circle, an online platform on research and educational projects related to sexuality and gender, queer theory, and politics, was launched.



[AZERBAIJAN WEB PAGE](#)

[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.RAINBOW-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.RAINBOW-EUROPE.ORG)