



# TAJIKISTAN

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

On 5 September, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare approved the introduction of HIV self-testing. Seven community-based organisations will be provided with the self-testing kits, which they can share with key populations.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Local activists recorded 12\* hate crime cases this year, including three murders, rape, blackmail, and extortion. It is feared that the number is much higher, but victims are afraid to ask for legal help. In fear of repercussions, journalists do not report on such cases.

On 11 May, a trans woman was stopped\* in the street by two people who claimed to be police officers and was verbally and physically assaulted by them. The officers told the victim to cooperate with them and help blackmail her friends. One of the perpetrators left his phone number. The victim reported the case to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and as instructed, went to the police station to bring the case forward. She reported the phone number as well. The two officers were called in for questioning, but they denied the incident and said this was the first time they saw the victim.

In September, a gay man was raped and murdered by a group of six men who lured him on a fake date\*. The victim's body was found in the river in Dushanbe. There was no investigation launched.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, the Ombudsperson stated that recommendations by the international community to ensure equal rights for LGBTI people will not be respected by Tajikistan. His reasoning included "the norms of morale and ethics of relationships between the people in the country". Although Tajikistan decriminalised consensual same-sex relations in 1998, being LGBTI is a taboo.

Stigma and discrimination against LGBTI people is actively upheld by public figures who use anti-LGBTI rhetoric. Authorities are said to keep a registrar of LGBTI people, which perpetuates hate in society and fear in the community.

On 25 July, the UN Human Rights Committee recommended

Tajikistan to combat discrimination and violence on grounds of SOGI, to tackle hate speech, hate crimes, and to ensure that such registrars are promptly erased. The Committee was also concerned about the Ombudsperson's statement from January.

## FAMILY

Local activists implemented the project "I am close to you" this year, which sought to share stories of challenges and difficulties and also acceptance, support, and love from siblings of LGBT people. Several meetings were held for LGBT people and their siblings. 200 cards were shared with LGBT people featuring positive stories. The project helped many siblings be more supportive.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The government looks to Russia when it comes to legislation aimed to control civil society. The new Administrative Procedure Code and the new Law on Non-Commercial Organisations continue being drafted. There is no information when the former would be sent to Parliament. The latter was submitted in 2017, but there has been no update on the process since. Both bills could significantly limit the operation and freedoms of civil society.

Local civil society groups were subjected to several audits this year by law enforcement agencies and the Governmental Committee on National Security, and were accused of spreading LGBT propaganda. These audits created fear among human rights defenders and LGBT activists.

## HEALTH

Due to high levels of violence and discrimination and a lack of mental health support services, at least five LGBT people committed suicide this year.\*

Prior to applying to the Global Fund, the Ministry of Health approved PrEP in February, which was recommended to Tajikistan by WHO. The draft protocol was introduced at the National Coordinating Committee's meeting in July. The final version will be published in 2020. The Republican AIDS Center has been implementing the clinical protocol. The draft sets out that 80-85 men who have sex with men (MSM) and 15-20 trans people will have access to PrEP.

At the same time, Article 119 of the Code of Administrative



Offences was amended in August, imposing increased penalties on HIV positive and TB patients who refuse medical care and treatment.

### POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Police officers detained\* several GBT people and sex workers and subjected them to forced HIV testing. The officers allegedly made lists of these individuals that may be used for further persecution.

### SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Article 130 of the Code of Administrative Offences was amended in August, imposing increased penalties on sex workers, including fines and detention for up to 15 days.

*\*Some of the information about Tajikistan was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous.*