



Tajikistan

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic had a serious impact on LGBTQI+ people this year. 24 LGBTQI+ people requested humanitarian aid and food assistance.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In February, a trans woman was barred by the police from boarding a plane because her passport did not match her gender expression. The video of the incident, which shows a close-up image of the woman's passport, went viral on Tajik social media channels. The woman received a lot of threats and hateful comments, saying for instance that she “doesn't deserve to live” or “has to be deported”.

A number of cafés and gyms put up posters using discriminatory and hateful language about LGBTQI+ people. Following backlash from those using these facilities, both local nationals and expats, the businesses took the posters down.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In an April report, a number of LGBT people spoke out about violence, forced marriage, sexual abuse, and conversion therapies that they suffered because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The testimonies were published anonymously.

On 4 August, a Tajik blogger was found dead in his apartment in Russia, in what is presumed to be a bias-motivated murder. It is feared that Russia, which has been considered a “safer” place for LGBTQI+ Tajik people, is also becoming increasingly dangerous.

A gay man, Surush, was brutally assaulted twice, after his colleagues found out about his sexual orientation. Surush reported the attacks to the police, who dismissed them and accused him of acting aggressively. Surush later tried to commit suicide. The case is currently at the Supreme Court.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, a working group was set up to prepare a draft anti-discrimination law. The group includes the Ombudsperson, representatives of the Ministry of Justice, and Members of Parliament. In March, the working group presented the first draft of the law, which includes sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds. No developments were reported since.

The law is expected to be adopted in 2021. Tajikistan received several recommendations from UN actors to introduce comprehensive and inclusive anti-discrimination legislation.

In May, the civil society organisation Anti-Discrimination Centre published a comprehensive report on the situation of LGBTI people in Central Asia, covering the situation in Tajikistan in detail.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Compared to previous years, a growing number of bloggers, including young bloggers, had an online presence where they openly addressed LGBTQI+ issues. For instance, 17-year-old Instagrammer, Amiran made headlines again this year for being an outspoken feminist and supporter of LGBT people. Amiran engages in public speaking and workshops for young people.

Open discussions about LGBTQI+ issues took place on a monthly basis on another Instagram account this year. The moderator remained anonymous.

A number of smaller online campaigns were also run online this year to combat anti-LGBTQI+ sentiments (see under **Access to goods and services**).

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

A number of cases were reported this year where LGBTQI+ people were forcibly married off by their families as a way to “cure” their identity. This practice has been ongoing for years, and mostly affects trans people.

HEALTH

An online network of LGBTQI+ friendly doctors was set up this year, which includes psychiatrists, endocrinologists, psychologists, gynaecologists, and other medical professionals.

More than 2,800 people had access to HIV self-test kits this year, thanks to a new USAID program.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

A trans woman was denied her legal gender recognition application this year, despite having fulfilled all the intrusive requirements. Unofficially, trans people usually need to pay a bribe to be able to access the procedure. Yet, a trans woman was denied by the National Registry Office this year, with the justification that her “actual appearance did not resemble a woman, and the request was therefore denied”.

A trans man successfully changed his documents this year, having gone through a complicated bureaucratic process.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

“Deafening silence”, the first ever documentary about LGBT people in Tajikistan was finished this year. The film was shot in 2019, over a period of two weeks. The film portrays the lives of six LGBT people, whose names and voices were changed, and their faces were not shown. The filmmaker is from Tajikistan, and fled the country after being persecuted there. The characters represent different regions, identities, genders and share a powerful testimony on the lived realities of LGBT people in the country.

“Lesbians are always forced to be married off, but they resist. Then the parents say that they have evil spirits inside, that [prayers] should be read - and everything will pass.” - Nuria, one of the people in the film

“My relatives were ashamed of me, they did not want to contact me. I was detained and beaten. I resigned from many places, because I could not stand the bullying from my colleagues. If you are not like everyone else, it causes aggression.” Hussein, one of the people in the film.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Police officers detained several LGBT people again this year. Several LGBT people also reported that the police unlawfully raided their homes, threatened and intimidated them, asked them intrusive questions, accused them of being HIV positive, and confiscated and inspected their phones.

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

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