



LGBT Individuals in Uzbekistan and Their Challenges: Discrimination and Hope

In Uzbekistan and many other countries, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) individuals face discrimination and marginalization in society. For these individuals, defending their rights, fighting against negative attitudes and stereotypes—especially in small villages and conservative segments of the population—is extremely difficult. In discussions about LGBT rights, myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions often spread more widely than the truth. In Uzbekistan, it is heartbreaking that homophobic individuals treat LGBT people as if they are subhuman, as if they are animals. No one chooses their gender or race at birth. I, too, will share my story here.

My Story

I was born 20 years ago as the only son after two daughters in a small village in Uzbekistan. As a child, I loved playing with dolls and putting on lipstick while imitating my sisters. Naturally, my "unusual" behavior displeased my father, and he couldn't accept it. My mother would say this was a phase that would pass with time and send me outside to play with boys. But they would laugh at me, tie me up, and hit me with a ball—memories that still haunt me.

One day, while painting my nails with my sisters, my uncle came in furious, smashed my fingers, and threatened to cut off my legs if I ever did it again. I was six years old, and the scars from that day remain.

As time passed, I started school. I had only one friend, a girl. I couldn't interact with boys because they mocked me, so I spent time with her. But one innocent day still haunts me. I went to her house to play, but she wasn't home. Her older brother invited me to play, and I agreed. We went to his room, and he assaulted me. My seven-year-old heart ached so much I thought it would stop. I returned home but couldn't tell anyone—I was terrified of losing my legs.

Years passed. I changed schools five times because the 31-year-old man who assaulted me proudly shared what he did, and his friends would blackmail me into sleeping with them, threatening to tell my family. I feared my family and complied. At 13, I took a sharp knife and tried to end my life, cutting my wrist. I fainted at the sight of blood. I told my family a dog bit me, but I still hide that secret, and the scars remain.

I was beaten countless times by neighbors, classmates, and relatives for my "bad behavior." At 15, my mother abandoned me at an orphanage. A week later, when she dragged me home by my arms, I had no memory of the promise I'd made to myself: "When I grow up, I will never forgive my family."

I am a living example: police once tried to force me onto a bench they'd "used" on many gays, laughing as they burned me with cigarettes. I'll never forget the humiliation inflicted on me by police on September 21, 2023. After that day, I left Telegram groups, speaking only to trusted friends.

Legal Persecution

Uzbekistan's Criminal Code includes harsh penalties for LGBT individuals. Article 120 criminalizes consensual same-sex relations ("Besoqolbozlik") with up to three years in prison. This law does not protect LGBT people—instead, it enables their persecution. Many fear disclosing their orientation due to potential criminalization.

In October 2023, two friends from Telegram faced this reality. One worked as a masseur; police posed as clients, arrested him, and after four hours of interrogation and beatings, released him. He called me, saying he wanted to die. I felt helpless but convinced him to hold on. Later, one friend disappeared, another was sentenced to three years of house arrest. Our missing friend hasn't been seen for seven months—even police don't know his whereabouts.

After his disappearance, the police station became our daily routine. We felt hunted. Threatening messages flooded our phones. I was expelled from university and fired without cause—police had interrogated my workplace. My family kicked me out. My boyfriend and I fled to Europe after a month in rented housing.

LGBT realities in Uzbekistan

In small villages and cities, LGBT individuals live in hiding due to discrimination from parts of society. Forced to conceal their identities, this secrecy harms their health, mental state, and social relationships. Many grow up under family and societal pressure.

By 18, I thought I was the only one like me. But through Telegram, I discovered many others like me. I made friends and found some comfort.

Not long after, a 17-year-old gay friend died by suicide due to family pressure. At his funeral, only a handful attended—most came just to eat the funeral meal. Uzbekistan may be the only country where national dishes are cooked at a human's final farewell. His story in short: raped by his father at 11, he took his life at 17. No investigator looked into his death. His father paid the police 50,000 Uzbek soum (local currency) to withhold his phone, which held critical evidence.

Violence and Systemic Complicity

LGBT individuals frequently face violence, discrimination, and threats, often condoned by police or authorities. They struggle to defend their rights, as society condemns them. For example, police themselves create Telegram groups to entrap LGBT individuals. They chat, exchange photos, arrange meetings—then "boom." Trapped like prey, gays face discrimination, pressure, beatings, and even sexual violence.

Seeking Asylum in Denmark

We're now in Denmark seeking political asylum, but a friend still in Uzbekistan faces danger. Police monitors him, summons him frequently, and his mother says they beat him for asking questions. He even sent a video of his neck cut with glass.

Asylum seekers often become pawns in political games, enduring grueling journeys to escape persecution. For LGBT refugees from Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, hope persists. But life in refugee camps—like Denmark's Jelling Camp—is bleak. Some wait 15 years in limbo. Imagine spending 15 years in a 2-square-meter room.

Denmark's recent cuts to asylum quotas crush hopes. Mandatory schools and volunteer initiatives aim to integrate refugees, but my story reflects a darker reality.

My Life in the Camp

For seven months, I've lived in Jelling Camp, battling trauma from my homeland. Psychologists help, but the camp's conditions are dire. New arrivals feel free at first, but months of waiting for interviews drive many mad. LGBT refugees face homophobia even here.

A month ago, my boyfriend smelled hash in the kitchen and reported to the office. The night supervisor confronted our neighbor, who exploded in rage against us: "You've ruined this camp! This place isn't for you! You're nothing—even the camp leader knows!"

I got scared and panicked. He kept verbally abuse us and hurled slurs about us and our mothers. Camp workers intended to move us to an LGBT-only building, but we refused. We filed a police report.

For a month, we've waited for a response, confined to our room.

In Conclusion

I wrote this article to prove that I am also a human being.