

## **Persecution of LGBT Iranians**

The Iranian regime persecutes and discriminates against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Tehran criminalizes and harshly punishes same-sex intercourse, provides no legal protections for LGBT individuals, compels LGBT children into undergoing brutal “conversion therapy,” and pressures gay and lesbian Iranians to undergo sex-reassignment surgery.

### *Criminalization and Punishment*

Consensual sexual relations between two adult men is forbidden by Iran’s [Islamic penal code](#). Penetrative intercourse is punishable by death, while non-penetrative intercourse generally incurs a penalty of 100 lashes.

Intercourse between two women incurs a penalty of 100 lashes and is punishable by death upon the fourth offense. The penal code even punishes with lashes non-blood-related women who “lay naked [together] under the same cover without any necessity.”

Therefore, gay, lesbian, and bisexual Iranians are forced to hide their sexual orientation and conceal same-sex romantic relationships in order to avoid arrest, imprisonment, flogging, and even execution.

### *Absence of Legal Protections*

Iranian law does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The state does not recognize same-sex marriages, civil unions, or domestic partnerships.

### *Conversion Therapy*

The United Nations [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) has expressed concern about reports that LGBT children in Iran have been forced to undergo forced “therapy”—including the administration of electric shocks, hormones, and psychiatric medications—to change their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

### *Pressure for Surgery*

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Iran’s first supreme leader, issued a fatwa (legal opinion) 30 years ago [permitting sex-reassignment surgery](#). Consequently, the Iranian regime permits and partially subsidizes such procedures. However, because Tehran criminalizes and harshly punishes same-sex intercourse and treats same-sex attraction as a disease, the regime’s

transgender policy de facto results in the [authorities](#) and [mental-health professionals and families](#) pressuring gay and lesbian cisgender Iranians to undergo unwanted surgery in order to be able to enter into same-sex relationships without fear of arrest and punishment.