



Azerbaijan: Investigate attacks on LGBTI+ persons

The undersigned organisations call on the Azerbaijani authorities to investigate a series of documented attacks on LGBTI+ persons and hold the perpetrators accountable.

Since 30 May 2021, there have been [credible reports of a series of attacks](#) against LGBTI+ persons in Baku, Azerbaijan. The attacks include physical violence, threats, and harassment with explicit homophobic and transphobic intent, including hateful comments made online.

According to local human rights defenders, ten hate-related incidents have been reported to the police.

The human rights situation for LGBTI+ persons in Azerbaijan has been of serious concern for years. Every year there are reports of attacks, arbitrary arrests, and intimidation of human rights defenders - including LGBTI+ activists and allies. In 2017 and 2019, there were well-documented reports of arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment of LGBTI+ persons by the police.

On 2021 Rainbow Europe Map and Index, the annual benchmarking on the legal and policy protection of LGBTI+ persons in Europe, ILGA-Europe ranked [Azerbaijan](#) at the bottom of the list of the 49 countries. The 2021 ILGA-Europe [Annual Review](#) report on Azerbaijan points to a high level of homophobic and transphobic speech and hate crimes, as well as lack of response by authorities in addressing such incidents.

Reported attacks against LGBTI+ persons in late May and early June this year were carried out by private persons and occurred in public and private places.

We, the undersigned organisations, are concerned that the reports have not been addressed in an adequate manner by law enforcement officials, and that the lack of response will promote a climate of impunity for homophobic and transphobic violence, leading perpetrators to feel emboldened to attack the LGBTI+ community even more.

Although the recent incidents have been reported to the police, no investigation has been started. The lawyer on these cases, Zhala Bayramova, reports that one victim has not been able to obtain the summons for a forensic medical examination from the prosecutor. In another case, the victim says she was refused medical assistance by two hospitals. In a third case, the victim has reported retaliation after her attempt to file a police report.

With this statement, we call on Azerbaijani authorities to swiftly respond to the recent instances of hate crime incidents with unambiguous public condemnation, and prompt, thorough, impartial, and

independent investigations to hold those responsible to account. We also call on the Azerbaijani authorities to take necessary precautions to ensure safety for the LGBTI+ community in general.

As a party to the European Convention of Human Rights, Azerbaijan is obligated to ensure the right to life and safety for all citizens (Article 2), respect for private and family life (Article 8) as well as equal treatment and non-discrimination (article 14).

In 2017, as a response to reports of arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment, torture and forced medical examinations in detention of LGBTI+ persons, [UN Experts¹](#) urged Azerbaijan to *“take concrete steps, through education and public policies, to combat deeply entrenched negative social perceptions, misconceptions and prejudice against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, in order to tackle the root causes of violence and discrimination perpetrated against them”*.

Azerbaijan should take immediate action to address LGBTI+-phobic violence and the climate of fear that prevails within the LGBTI+ community, in order to prevent an escalation of violence and hate crimes, lack of trust in institutions within the LGBTI+ community, and to ensure that Azerbaijan fulfills their international human rights obligations.

The undersigned organisations are closely monitoring the situation.

ILGA Europe

The Norwegian Helsinki Committee

Civil Rights Defenders

RFSL(the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex rights)

¹ **Vitit Muntarbhorn**, Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; **Dainius Pūras**, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and **José Antonio Guevara Bermúdez**, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention