

Attacks Against Members of the LGBTQ+ Community in Afghanistan July 2021 to November 2023

Report by Liv Wittenberg, Tufts University, December 2023

Note: The attacks below likely represent only a fraction of all attacks perpetrated against members of the LGBTQ+ community in Afghanistan since July 2021. This is particularly the case because many surviving victims or families, friends, and neighbors of victims are attempting to maintain the sexuality and gender identity of the victim a secret, and are thus reluctant to report. Many stories are told in reports, but are anonymized and without detail. They are included in the section for the month in which they were published.

“None found” ≠ no attacks

July 2021

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
07/13/2021	“Borderlands between areas controlled by the Afghan government and areas controlled by the Taliban”	Taliban judge Gul Rahim discussed the punishment for homosexuality and engaging in gay sex: the death sentence, either by stoning or being crushed by a fallen wall	Bild

August 2021

Date	Location`	Incident Details	News Links
08/15/2021	Kabul	A gay man, boyfriend to “Gabir”, was abducted from his home and killed by the Taliban on the same day they overtook Kabul. He was returned to his family’s home in pieces to show the Afghan people “this is what we do to gay people”. The couple were planning to leave Afghanistan to marry when the Taliban took over. Gabir then started getting death threats from the Taliban that they knew he was gay, who his gay friends were, and “if we find you, we will kill you.”	Pink News
Sometime in August 2021	Unknown	A gay man, “Hanan”, was tricked, through an elaborate ruse in which Taliban members pretended to be someone who could help him flee the country, beaten, raped, and outed to his father by 2 Taliban men.	ITV News

Sometime in August 2021	Anonymous	Bilal Saraj, an anonymized member of the queer community is captured and tortured by the Taliban. Bilal was tied against a metal rod and had ice water thrown in his face nightly, in attempts to film a confession for use in a trial against him. He was also hit with cable lines, the butts of guns, and sticks. One night, after being beaten senseless, Bilal awoke to sleeping guards and fled into Pakistan, where he is still in hiding.	Vice News
August 28, 2021	Kabul	A former doctor named Allahyar was stopped by Taliban guards at the hospital where he worked, punched repeatedly, and suffered blood clots and severe eye damage. He suspects his former hospital colleagues informed the Taliban of his sexual identity. After the incident, his hospital threw him out.	Vice News

September 2021

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
09/18/2021	Afghanistan	5 anonymized members of the LGBT community express that they are in hiding and that some have received threats from the Taliban or have heard of LGBT people or their loved ones being beaten, raped, or killed	CNN
9/4/2021	Anonymous	Ihsan is a 40-year-old gay man who formerly worked with an organization that did HIV testing in Afghanistan. 20 days after the Taliban took over Kabul, a group of armed men came to his house. He managed to escape out the back door disguised as a woman, but the men took his brother and interrogated/beat him for three days about his whereabouts.	HRW
09/27/2021	Near Mazar e-Sharif	Khaibar Khan Dawlatzai is beaten in the head and runs for his life into the woods, evading Taliban capture four times before being successfully smuggled out of Afghanistan.	Roshaniva

October 2021

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
10/29/2021	Kabul	A Ministry spokesperson told <i>Reuters</i> ““LGBT... That's against our Sharia law,” in reference to its agenda with regard to human rights protection.	Open News

10/2021	Unknown	Gay man beaten with power cables and electrocuted by the Taliban at a safe house for 20 days before escaping, contacting Roshaniya, and the organization helping him secure a visa to Pakistan.	LGBTQ Nation
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January 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
01/26/22	Afghanistan and potential receiving refugee countries	HRW interviewed 60 Afghan members of the LBGTT community and found consistent reports of fear and experience of sexual harassment, assault, kidnapping, and death. Some particular (anonymized) anecdotes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ali, whose father was a Taliban official and who sought out to kill him; he managed to flee the country - Ramiz, who was flagged at a checkpoint as a gay man, and was then kidnapped, whipped, and gang-raped by members of the Taliban for hours 	HRW
n/a	n/a	Taliban allowing for increased violence and discrimination against LGBTQ by non-Taliban <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16-year-old trans person locked up, beaten by family 	Guardian
“In January”	n/a	Zabihullah Muhajed tells Radio Free Europe “Afghanistan is an Islamic country. Homosexuality is banned here. Our society does not accept it, and Islam has also banned it. They don’t even exist in our society. If some have appeared due to the invasion of Afghanistan by the United States and NATO, they are against the values of our society and we will obviously stop them.”	Radio Free Europe

February 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
02/07/2022	Afghanistan	Embellishes on HRW January report with following anecdotes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paigham, bisexual Afghan activist, married her best male friend and fled country after time in hiding - Lesbian forced by family to marry so that her uncle, who recently joined the Taliban, would not kill her; was outed and then imprisoned 	WBUR
02/27/2022	Unknown	Sara, a non-binary person in Afghanistan, was brutally stabbed 18 times by Taliban forces who said as they attacked them “Shame on you, it’s our time to finish people like you.”	Metro News

02/2022	Afghanistan	Reports that Taliban officials are circulating kill lists of LGBTQ people. Quote from NGO Rainbow Road describes a specific attack: “People entered the house without any sort of uniform, and while ransacking the place they discovered information that made them suspect the person was part of the [LGBT+] community. Then they took their phone, through which they confirmed the person was a part of the community and proceeded to physically assault and humiliate the individual. Then they found their passport and burned it	France 24
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March 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
03/18/2022	Unknown	Imran Khan evacuated by NGO after months in hiding	Blade

April 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
04/15/2022	n/a	Report compiled and submitted to UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Explains types of violence perpetrated against LGBTQ in Afghanistan since the takeover, including threats, harassment, beating, stabbing, arbitrary kidnapping and detention, disappearances, shootings and killings, sexual and gender-based violence, abuse within families, forced marriage, extortion/blackmail and forced sexual favors	ILGA World , ILGA Asia

May 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
05/05/2022		<p>Article discussing desperation of LGBT people in Afghanistan. Includes the following anecdotes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dozens of cases of harassment, beatings, burnings, and killings of young people - Young man's abused body was dumped in a street days after he went missing - Lesbian who refused an arranged marriage was killed by her family - Stress of situation and lack of family support leads to increased mental illness, homelessness - Subhan, 20 - abused by his family and mocked by community 	Foreign Policy
05/2022	n/a	Pari, a 48-year-old gay man who previously ran a clinic for men who had sex with men, beat and detained by the Taliban, the names of his past clients demanded (security guards of the building in which the shut-down clinic operated also beaten months before). Escaped detention by having sex with a guard.	Blade
05/04/2022	Near Mazar-i-Sharif	Anonymized gay man Sultan Popal (32) is taken to a guest house of the Taliban and raped and beaten throughout the night. He escaped to the home of a friend.	LGBTQ Nation

July 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
Sometime in July 2022	Kabul	An anonymous man under the pseudonym Qadam Shah, a former child protection activist and former military member, tells Vice News that Taliban members arrested him, beat him unconscious with their guns, and he awoke in a hospital with marks of torture on his body. He said: "They called me a slur for LGBTQ based on my effeminate appearance, and started hitting my head with the butt of their guns."	Vice News

August 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
Unknown	Kabul	Hamed Sabouri, a 22-year-old gay man, was kidnapped, tortured, and killed by the Taliban. They then sent a video of the murder to his family.	Guardian

August 2021- August 2022	Afghanistan	Rainbow Road, a Canadian NGO dedicated to protecting targeted LGBT individuals, published report based on 1,739 requests for help detailing killings, kidnappings/disappearances, and instances of sexual violence	Rainbow Road
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October 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
10/22/2022	Unknown	When Sohil, an LGBT rights activist and member of the queer community, went to his local government office to get a copy of his birth certificate and ID, he was taken into a room, beaten, and had boiling water poured on his chest by members of the Taliban for wearing “western” clothes. Sohil reported he felt they somehow knew he wasn’t straight, and that was the reason for the attack.	Pink News

November 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
11/23/2022	Logar region of east Afghanistan	12 individuals were publicly whipped at a football stadium, accused of “moral crimes” including gay sex.	BBC
11/07/2022	Kabul	2 gay men anonymously reported their experiences - 23-year-old dropped out of college, went into hiding, forced to change appearance, operate secret massage center to make a living	Radio Free Europe

December 2022

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
12/1/2022	Kabul	Supreme Court announced that individuals had been punished for homosexuality	Twitter
12/14/ 2022	Southern Afghanistan, Qalat	Continuation of public floggings. 27 victims in Southern Afghanistan, another 7 in Qalat, with reasons including “moral crimes” such as “illicit relationships”	VOA

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
2/14/2023	n/a	<p>Update in vein of HRW 2022 report based on interviews with 22 LGBTQ people still in Afghanistan. General trend is that attacks have become more systematic and legalized, focused on gay men and trans women. Anecdotes include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shahnaz, 22-year-old trans woman's head forcibly shaven, beaten - Fatima, lesbian whose father was beaten and arm broken, job replaced by Taliban loyalist 	Outright
2/20/2023	n/a	<p>Increased violence since the HRW report. Suggests that violence has become more premeditated. Anecdotes include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trans man was savagely beaten by his uncle who then threatened to hand him over to the Taliban - An intersex woman who'd entered into an arranged marriage reported being beaten by her husband and forced to sleep in a cowshed. He, too, threatened to hand her over to the Taliban. 	Blade
02/01/2023	Kabul	<p>LGBT activists from the Behesht Collective gather at a private residence to call on the world to pay attention to what is happening to Afghanistan's queer community, saying, "We decided to stage this protest because the USA and western countries left us alone here." – Qadam Shah</p> <p>Immediately after, the activists fled the country into a neighboring country to escape the persecution of the Taliban. But the country they fled still considers same sex relations illegal. Even still, the protesters say it's better than Afghanistan.</p>	Pink News
02/25/2023	n/a	<p>Sapna, a Transgender Afghan activist also known as Tawab Aspandi, passes away, losing her battle with AIDS.</p> <p>Sapna was forced to relocate to Pakistan when her brothers threatened to murder her if she didn't leave their home. She fled to Pakistan where she worked as a domestic laborer and sex worker, where she contracted AIDS. She was awaiting her relocation to Canada (through the support of Roshaniya and the Urgent Action Fund), when she fell gravely ill, before passing away.</p>	Roshaniya (Instagram)

April 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
4/14/ 2023	n/a	Gay man and his partner were beaten by Taliban after being seen kissing	Twitter

May 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
05/19/2023	Afghanistan	Woman with “homosexual content” found on her phone was forced to marry a man. Upon refusal, she was murdered by her brothers.	LGBTQ Nation

June 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
06/04/2023	Afghanistan	5 LGBTQ Afghans interviewed, 3 of whom have escaped and 2 of whom are in hiding	Metro
06/08/2023	Afghanistan	Multiple people trapped and in hiding	BBC
06/21/2023	Afghanistan	Afghanistan tops list of countries seeking help	Rainbow Road

August 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
8/30/2023	Afghanistan	A 19-year-old anonymous man, a member of the queer community, tells Radio Free Europe that he and his boyfriend were arrested in a taxi, held and tortured for 2 days and nights by the Taliban. They were also made to renounce homosexuality and vow to never see each other again. The Taliban also informed their families their sons were gay. He had to quit going to school to protect his identity from the Taliban.	Radio Free Europe

September 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
09/2023	Afghanistan	The Lancet, the UK based, peer reviewed medical journal which began in 1823, publishes an article on the health impacts of Taliban rule on LGBT people in Afghanistan. Key findings include: “In a hostile environment, access to adequate health care remains severely limited.”, therefore HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, sexual health visits, etc., go unaddressed, leaving people without the care they need to stay healthy.	The Lancet

October 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
10/31/2023	Herat	Faraidun Fakory, director of Paiwand 34, an LGBT+ Afghan advocacy group, is detained by the Taliban	The Behesht Collective

November 2023

Date	Location	Incident Details	News Links
11/30/2023	Herat	The case of Faraidun Fakory, Director of Paiwand34, the first LGBT organization in Afghanistan LGBT Peer Advocate, progresses. The prosecutor for the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan completes his investigation and charges Faraidun with 10 crimes including His case will now move forward to sentencing at the Military Tribunal, where he will likely be killed.	Rosaniya (Facebook Page)