# World's first openly gay imam assassinated



Imam Muhsin Hendricks, the world's first openly gay Imam, was fatally shot in Gqeberha, South Africa, on Saturday morning. The incident occurred just hours before he was scheduled to officiate a marriage for a same-sex couple, highlights the ongoing tensions surrounding LGBTQ+ rights in the region. His assassination has sent shockwaves through the LGBTQ+ community, raising fears that it is likely to have been motivated by prejudice.

Hendricks, aged 58, was attacked around 10am while seated in the back of a gold Volkswagen T-Roc parked in Haley Place, Extension 24 in Bethelsdorp. According to Captain Sandra Janse van Rensburg, an Eastern Cape police spokesperson, a silver Hilux double-cab vehicle blocked the T-Roc. Two masked assailants emerged and opened fire, resulting in the Imam's death. The driver, whose identity and condition remain unknown, was reportedly unharmed but witnessed the violent event unfold.

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World) confirmed his death shortly after it occurred, expressing profound sadness over the loss of a figure who was both a community leader and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. The South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development has pledged to monitor the investigation, particularly regarding indications that the murder may have been a hate crime.

Local community reactions have pointed to a broader context of hostility faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in South Africa, a country where same-sex relationships are legal, yet stigma and discrimination persist. Sharon Cox, manager of health and support services at the Triangle Project, stated, “We await more information on the motive behind the tragic murder of Imam Muhsin Hendricks. It is hard to imagine that this is going to be anything other than a hate crime fuelled by prejudice.”

In the aftermath of Hendricks's death, his family is now reportedly in hiding, following concerns for their safety. His cousin, Moegsien Hendricks, recounted that Muhsin had previously received death threats, which he took seriously enough to advise his children on how to respond should violence occur. "He was committed to being in service of people, young Muslim men and women, queer Muslims who wanted to practice Islam in a normal way," Moegsien remarked in an interview.

Imam Hendricks had a significant impact on both the Muslim and LGBTQ+ communities. Born into a conservative Muslim family, he came out as gay at the age of 29. His commitment to advocating for queer Muslims led him to establish The Inner Circle, a group that promotes inclusivity within the faith. He had faced opposition for his beliefs, having been dismissed from his position as an imam after revealing his sexuality.

Activists and government officials have condemned the act, which many see as a grim reminder of the violence still directed towards the LGBTQ+ community. Zackie Achmat, an activist, expressed the sentiment that Hendricks was victimised due to his simultaneous identities as a Muslim and a gay man. "His cowardly assassins have not yet shown their faces. They are part of a cult of death and hate," Achmat stated, urging the public and authorities to address the culture of intolerance that the assassins thrive upon.

Imam Hendricks’s contributions to the LGBTQ+ community were further acknowledged by the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, which described his murder as a direct assault on those advocating for similar rights in South Africa. In a bid to acknowledge his life and work, many activists have taken to social media to share condolences and celebrate Hendricks's legacy as a pioneer for many queer Muslims.

Investigations into the circumstances surrounding Imam Hendricks's assassination are ongoing, as officials work to determine the motive behind this tragic event. His body is expected to undergo an autopsy before being returned to Cape Town for burial, fulfilling his family's wishes for closure.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.foxnews.com/world/worlds-first-openly-gay-imam-shot-dead-south-africa-authorities> - This article corroborates the details of Imam Muhsin Hendricks's assassination, including the location and the ongoing investigation into whether it was a hate crime. It also highlights his role as the founder of The Inner Circle, an organization advocating for LGBTQ+ rights within Islamic communities.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmhuTfaUqn0> - This YouTube video discusses the tragic event of Imam Muhsin Hendricks's assassination, emphasizing his advocacy for LGBTQ+ inclusion in Islamic communities and the potential hate crime investigation.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although not directly available, this source is mentioned as the original article detailing Imam Hendricks's life, death, and impact on both the Muslim and LGBTQIA+ communities.
* <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-> - This would typically provide additional coverage of the event from a reputable news source, though the exact link is not specified. It would likely discuss the international reaction and the broader context of LGBTQ+ rights in South Africa.