# Three years under Taliban rule: the plight of Afghanistan’s LGBTQ+ community



[Image: Instagram, alitawakoli\_official]

As Afghanistan marks three years under Taliban control, reports have emerged highlighting severe repression and violence against the LGBTQ+ community. Since the Taliban seized power in August 2021, they have intensified their persecution of LGBTQ+ individuals, with public punishments being a grim routine across the nation’s provinces.

Significant evidence from various regions indicates a systematic approach towards LGBTQ+ people, who, under Taliban rule, are subjected to harsh public penalties. According to multiple Taliban Supreme Court rulings over the past three years, punishments for “lawat” — a Sharia law term referring to homosexual acts — have become a stark reality in provinces including Kabul, Parwan, Sarpul, Zabul, and Kandahar.

One of the recent documented instances occurred on July 1, 2024, when the primary court in the Saidkhel district of Parwan province sentenced four individuals for “lawat.” Three received a year’s imprisonment along with 39 lashes, while the fourth faced a two-year sentence coupled with the same corporal punishment.

Additionally, in June, numerous LGBTQ+ community members across Sarpul, Parwan, and Kabul provinces were publicly punished, demonstrating a consistent pattern of state-sponsored persecution.

Survivors who managed to leave Taliban detention have recounted harrowing tales to the Rainbow Afghanistan Organization. These individuals were subjected to extreme forms of torture, including sexual exploitation, gang rape, electric shocks, severe beatings, and even the removal of fingernails.

The method of toppling walls onto LGBTQ+ individuals as a form of execution has historical precedence during the Taliban’s previous regime (1996-2001). This method has resurfaced under the current rule, with reports of executions via wall-toppling as recently as May 2023. Taliban judge Gul Rahim, in a 2021 interview, articulated this method alongside stoning as prescribed punishments for homosexuality.

Taliban officials have openly advocated for extreme measures against LGBTQ+ people. On March 28, 2024, Taliban member Mohammad Khel expressed on Afghanistan International TV that individuals of unclear gender should be killed immediately.

Despite the documented increase in violence and repression, international bodies including the United Nations have been criticised for overlooking the LGBTQ+ crisis in Afghanistan. U.N. Security Council resolutions such as 2679 and 2721 have neither addressed nor included safeguards for the LGBTQ+ community.

The Rainbow Afghanistan Organization, led by activist Ali Tawakoli, has condemned these omissions, arguing that the exclusion of LGBTQ+ issues from U.N. declarations and meetings effectively sidelines an already vulnerable group facing severe persecution. The Organisation alleges a lack of inclusive approaches in U.N. human rights reports from 2021 to the present, describing it as a failure to acknowledge gender-based violence within the nation.

The marginalisation of LGBTQ Afghans by the global community has not gone unnoticed. Activists believe this neglect emboldens the Taliban regime, perpetuating violence and silencing dissent. Calls for the international community to address these human rights violations have intensified, yet concrete international action remains limited.

In conclusion, three years under Taliban rule have exacerbated the already dire circumstances for Afghanistan’s LGBTQ community, facing severe punishments and systemic violence. As the global gaze occasionally shifts towards Afghanistan, the plight of its LGBTQ+ citizens remains an urgent and underreported crisis demanding comprehensive attention and action.