Mass Detention of Azeri LGBTI People – The LGBTI Community Urgently Needs Your Support

statement & call to action, protection from violence and hate

CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT

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Mass detention of Azeri LGBTI people– the LGBTI community urgently needs your support

Alarming stories of physical violence, verbal abuse, forced medical examinations and detentions of LGBTI people have been emerging from Azerbaijan over the past two weeks.

The signatories of this statement are appalled by the situation being described by LGBTI activists and lawyers based in the country:

- Members of the LGBTI community have reported being assaulted, forcibly medically examined, fined or forced to reveal contact details from their mobile phones.
- Media reports published over the weekend (1 October) also included references to detainees being electrocuted.
- The Azerbaijan authorities have confirmed that the detentions took place and defended them by claiming that the raids were motivated by public health concerns (implying that it was a coincidence that LGBTI people were being detained).

We welcome the news from the Ministry of Internal Affairs (following a statement on 2 October) that all detainees have been released. However, this update does not signal the end of the crisis. Intergovernmental bodies and international institutions have an undeniable responsibility to speak out now and support the victims.

The undersigned human rights organisations are calling on international institutions to put their human rights mandates into practice. We urge them to use all possible mechanisms available to strongly condemn the situation in Azerbaijan, such as public statements and bilateral diplomacy.

Given the seriousness of the human rights abuses reported from multiple sources, the reaction from international institutions needs to be stronger, more visible, and more sustained. So far, the public response from international institutions has been slow.

The civil society organisations who have signed this joint statement urge the international community to:

- Be more **vocal in their condemnation** of the treatment of LGBTI people in Azerbaijan
- Push for a **thorough, independent investigation** into the police raids
- Keep the victims of these raids at the **forefront of their minds and actions**

Resources needed to support victims and their communities

The LGBTI community in Azerbaijan (and their allies) now require specific assistance for multiple needs: ranging from immediate financial resources to cover fines and court fees, legal assistance and medical care to more long-term requirements such as relocation, resettlement and psychosocial support. Some victims are reportedly being released into homelessness/precarious housing, in some cases without the support of their family. Local activists and NGOs do not have the capacity or immediate resources to deal with this crisis alone.

This is where the LGBTI movement in Europe can mobilise to support our community members in Azerbaijan. ILGA-Europe have launched an urgent appeal for donations to help organisations to support the victims; these funds will be re-granted to activists working directly with people who have been detained.

Human rights violations are always shocking. While these developments could not have been predicted, we can control how we choose to respond.

Signed:
ILGA-Europe – the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
COC Netherlands
Stonewall
International Partnership for Human Rights
The Equality Network
European AIDS Treatment Group
Human Rights First
TGEU – Transgender Europe
Kaleidoscope Trust
Human Dignity Trust
African Rainbow Family
UK Lesbian & Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG)
All Out
Sidaction
HIV Justice Network
Apoyo Positivo

For more information, please contact:
Emma Cassidy, ILGA-Europe Communications and Media Officer, +32 2 609 56 50; emma@ilga-europe.org
Steve Taylor, ILGA-Europe Communications Director, + 32 2 609 54 16/+32 492 25 36 93 (mobile)