

International attention must focus on LGBTI people in Azerbaijan after police raids

[Press Release](#), [Safety](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Freedom from Torture](#)

Members of the LGBTI community in Baku are being actively targeted by police raids, with those detained being assaulted, forcibly medically examined, fined or forced to reveal contact details from their mobile phones.

ILGA-Europe are extremely concerned by news of human rights abuses emerging from Azerbaijan.

Exact numbers are hard to clarify at this point. According to our sources in the region, at least 50 members of the LGBTI community have been detained in raids that have taken place throughout the second half of September.

“Attempts by the authorities in Azerbaijan to downplay these detentions are not convincing.” commented **Evelyne Paradis, ILGA-Europe Executive Director**.

“Forcing any LGBTI people to be medically examined against their will is disturbing enough, but we also have received multiple reports of verbal and physical abuse. There is no justification for this indiscriminate targeting of people perceived to be members of the LGBTI community. It is a clear and serious breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.”

On [26 September](#), the Ministry of Internal Affairs confirmed that police raids had been taking place against individuals said to be “disrespecting the people around them”. The Ministry said that so-called sexual minorities had been detained, that the detainees had been forced to undergo medical examinations, and that the police investigation was not yet complete.

Human rights organisations and lawyers working in the region have spoken to LGBTI detainees and ILGA-Europe has seen victim accounts that appear to be credible.

Some victims told human rights activists that they were only released after handing over the contact information of other members of the LGBTI community to the police. Other detainees reported being arrested during the day or at their place of work.

Azerbaijan currently lies at [the bottom of ILGA-Europe’s Rainbow Europe ranking](#), with minimal legal protections for LGBTI people.

The Ministry’s press service also stated that 16 people had been diagnosed with “AIDS or syphilis”. ILGA-Europe have not spoken directly with ministry officials but we assume that this is an inaccurate reference to HIV testing, confirming the authorities’ overall lack of understanding on the issue.

Evelyne Paradis continued: *“ILGA-Europe are worried about the fate of the victims of these raids, and are calling for the immediate release of anyone still in detention. An independent investigation is now required, along with thorough monitoring of any subsequent trials.”*

We also ask intergovernmental institutions (such as the Council of Europe, the European Union, OSCE and the United Nations) to use all mechanisms available under their respective human right mandates to condemn the situation in Azerbaijan.”