

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299

www.hrw.org

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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH | OCTOBER 2008

These Everyday Humiliations

Violence Against Lesbians, Bisexual Women, and Transgender Men in Kyrgyzstan

Violence against women is a nationwide crisis in Kyrgyzstan. But women who are attracted to other women, or who violate rigid gender roles defining how a woman should look or behave, may be singled out for violent retaliation. Moreover, the government ignores their needs—and denies their very existence.

This report documents how lesbians, transgender men, and women who have sex with other women face violence, rape, psychological abuse, and confinement and stigmatization in Kyrgyzstan. Abuses may happen on the street or in the home, at the hands of strangers or family members. Social prejudice and silence mean that survivors find little practical hope of government protection. Police themselves sometimes abuse lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men, and harass organizations that defend their basic rights.

The Kyrgyzstan government’s response to violence against women will be incomplete until it identifies and addresses the actual situations of all the victims. The state must recognize the human rights of people facing abuses because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men confront Kyrgyzstan authorities with a simple, essential demand: acknowledge we exist.

Remembrance Day. A vigil held by the Kyrgyzstan nongovernmental organization Labrys on November 21, 2007, in Ala-Too Square in Bishkek to commemorate transgender people worldwide killed because of their gender identity or expression.

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