



## **Bangladesh - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 8 March 2012**

### **Information on homosexuals and homosexuality in Bangladesh including legality, Government and societal attitude to and treatment of homosexuals, available support groups.**

Research compiled in July 2010 by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* notes:

“Homosexual acts are illegal according to Section 377 of the Penal Code of Bangladesh...” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (19 July 2010) *Bangladesh: Treatment of homosexuals including legislation, availability of state protection and support services*)

This report also states:

“In 5 March 2010 correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Refugee Coordinator of Amnesty International (AI) in Toronto provided the following information, which was forwarded to her by a Bangladeshi researcher with AI's International Secretariat in London. The AI Researcher indicated that it is generally unsafe for homosexuals in Bangladesh to publicly reveal their sexual orientation, and they frequently marry persons of the opposite gender to give the appearance of heterosexuality (AI 5 Mar. 2010).” (Ibid)

It is also pointed out in this report that:

“Boys Only Bangladesh (BoB) is a Bangladeshi social organization for gay men...An article in *Himal Southasian* describes BoB as a group that acts as a meeting place for homosexuals, advocates for homosexual rights and equality, and is working for Section 377 to be repealed...The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) identifies BoB as one of several NGOs that participated in a one-day campaign for sexual and bodily rights...Another group that participated in the one-day campaign was the Bandhu Social Welfare Society (BSWS), which organized a debate on sexual rights vs. social norms... According to *Himal Southasian*, BSWS provides health care and support to Bengali men who have sex with men (MSM); its activities include assisting MSM in obtaining employment, and educating society on MSM-related issues and the difficulties confronting homosexuals...” (Ibid).

A publication in February 2011 by the *International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans And Intersex Association* notes:

“Section 377, hence, does not impair Bangladesh's moderate image in the world and questions about the country's human rights record on the issue of homosexuality are avoided in the international arena. Nonetheless, Section 337 forces the local LGBT community into a shadow existence. Their official illegality silences their voices in the public sphere.” (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans And Intersex Association (11 February 2011) *Homophobic tendencies still abound in South Asia*)

This document also states:

“Some gay men who inform their families about their sexual orientation are forced into heterosexual marriages.” (Ibid)

A report issued in April 2011 by the *United States Department of State* commenting on events of 2010 notes:

“Homosexual acts remained illegal, but in practice the law was rarely enforced. There were a few informal support networks for gay men, but organizations to assist lesbians were rare. Informal organizations reported that they were unable to organize, do outreach, petition for changes to the law, or set up permanent establishments because of the possibility of police raids. One gay rights organization stated that gay men and lesbians also often faced extreme family pressure to marry opposite sex partners. Attacks on lesbians and gay men occurred on occasion, but those offenses were difficult to document because victims desired confidentiality. Strong social stigma based on sexual orientation was common and repressed open discussion about the subject. Local human rights groups did not monitor the problem, and there were few studies on homosexuality in the country. Although overt discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals was fairly rare--partly because few individuals openly identified their orientation--there was significant societal discrimination. Openly gay individuals, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds, found that their families and local communities ostracized them. Some sought refuge in the transgender or "hijra" community. (United States Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Bangladesh*).

In January 2012 a report published by *Human Rights Watch* commenting on events of the preceding year states:

“Section 377 of Bangladesh's criminal code punishes consensual homosexual conduct with penalties up to life imprisonment.” (Human Rights Watch (22 January 2012) *World Report 2011 - Bangladesh*)

## References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### **Sources Consulted**

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