Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) travelers face significant challenges and restrictions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Attitudes hostile to LGBTQ individuals vary between countries according to legal and political systems, and religious and cultural norms.

Many countries in the Middle East rarely distinguish between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals and instead use the derogatory term shath (deviant) to refer to any member of the LGBTQ community. As the purpose of this report is to address risks stemming from such perception, it will focus on individuals belonging to the general LGBTQ community without discussing specific sub-groups. Anti-LGBTQ attitudes are deep-rooted, so the nature of the risks for LGBTQ travelers is likely to remain broadly static in the region. In general, LGBTQ travelers in the region should keep a low profile at all times, and exercise caution.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Egypt**

Although homosexuality is not explicitly a crime in Egypt, LGBTQ individuals have been jailed under a statute condemning ‘debauchery and incitement to debauchery’.

**Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries**

Homosexuality is considered illegal across the GCC. Penalties are severe, and in some countries can include execution.

**Iran**

Iran’s theocratic government has clear, strict laws against homosexuality, and these are regularly enforced.

**Israel**

LGBT travelers should exercise additional caution in more conservative Arab-majority areas of the country.

**Jordan**

While homosexuality is not explicitly illegal in Jordan, judges have used other statutes to prosecute individuals for acts relating to homosexuality.

**Morocco**

Homosexuality is illegal here; a court in February 2016 sentenced two people to 18 months in prison on charges of homosexuality.

**BE AWARE**

In general, LGBTQ travelers in the region should keep a low-profile at all times, and exercise vigilance and caution.

LGBTQ travelers in the Middle East must generally accept that there is a credible risk of harassment or legal implications if they draw attention to their sexuality. They should therefore avoid drawing attention to themselves or their profile through public displays of affection or expressing opinions on gay-rights issues in public.

If LGBTQ travelers receive unusual attention or are victims of abusive remarks, they should ignore provocations and leave the area immediately.

Particularly in countries where the risk of being targeted in homophobic attacks is higher.

**Map: Legal status toward homosexuality in the Middle East and North Africa region**

- **LEGAL AND ACCEPTED**
- **ILLEGAL AND NOT ACCEPTED**
- **NO LEGAL STATUS/UNCLEAR**
- **ILLEGAL, DEATH PENALTY**