

# A GUIDE FOR LGBT TRAVELERS IN MENA



Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) travelers face significant challenges and restrictions in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Attitudes hostile to LGBT 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 LGBT community. As the purpose of this report is to address risks stemming from such perception, it will focus on individuals belonging to the general LGBT community without discussing specific sub-groups. Anti-LGBT attitudes are deep-rooted, so the nature of the risks for LGBT travelers is likely to remain broadly static in the region. In general, LGBT 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, LGBT 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, LGBT travelers in the region should keep a low-profile at all times, and exercise vigilance and caution.

LGBT 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 LGBT 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.



LEGAL AND ACCEPTED



ILLEGAL AND NOT ACCEPTED



NO LEGAL STATUS/UNCLEAR



ILLEGAL, DEATH PENALTY

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