

LGBTQIA+ life challenges in Ivory Coast



Legal Challenges

Same-gender sexual activities for both men and women are legal in private and have never been criminalized in Ivory Coast. However, public same-gender sexual acts will be punished with imprisonment for 3 months to 2 years and a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 francs (75–450€). Same-gender couples are not legally recognized and are not eligible to adopt a child. There is no legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity but there is no report of official discrimination in employment, housing, statelessness, or access to education or health care. Transgender people are not legally recognized and they are not allowed to change their name and gender. The UN's Universal Periodic Review recommended that the Ivory Coast take measures to ensure non-discrimination, which was accepted by the government.



Activism

No structured organizations working with LGBTQIA+ persons are identified in Ivory Coast. The few LGBTQIA+ organizations in the country operated with caution to avoid being targeted by police and armed forces. However, newspapers reported favorably on a New Year's Eve party held by a group of lesbians in Abidjan.

To find a helpline, LGBTQIA+ people may contact

<http://www.famille.gouv.ci/public/contacts> and <https://www.rubanrouge.org/> from following website: <https://findahelpline.com/ci>.



Societal Challenges

Societal stigmatization of the LGBTQIA+ communities is reportedly widespread in Ivory Coast. Despite the law, LGBTQIA+ communities risk harassment and discrimination. LGBTQIA+ individuals especially gay men and transgender people are reportedly subjected to moral, verbal, physical, and sexual sorts of violence, beatings, imprisonment, humiliation, and extortion from police, gendarmes, and armed forces. The police forces are the first and worst persecutors and oppressors of the LGBTQIA+ communities. Complaints are not filed for fear of reprisal. As a result, LGBTQIA+ communities isolate themselves. The social stigmatization of persons living with HIV/AIDS is also prevalent. The situation of the LGBTQIA+ community reportedly improved after the post-electoral crisis but remained precarious. LGBTQIA+ communities are becoming increasingly more visible and tolerated, especially with the introduction of two gay nightclubs in the country.



Displacement

LGBTQIA+ people who run away from home often have to turn to sex work. Yet, even at home, they face being forced into sex work by their own parents who are willing to tolerate their lifestyle as long as they are bringing money home. As soon as they are not lucrative enough, the families will no longer tolerate their sexual orientation and make them leave. LGBTQIA+ people forced escape their home country and seek asylum in European countries such as Italy, France and Belgium.

Resources

- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Ivory_Coast
- [2] https://ilga.org/downloads/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2019.pdf
- [3] <https://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/cote-divoire-lgbti-resources>
- [4] <https://www.equaldex.com/region/cote-divoire>
- [5] <https://www.refworld.org/docid/549d688a4.html>