

ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS

Abstract

When one thinks of ‘honour’ crimes, the first thing that most likely comes to mind is violence that is perpetrated against heterosexual women in Islamic communities, such as stoning to death for alleged adultery. A similar example, and one that has received scant attention in research, is that individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) are also victim to honour crimes. One of the key reasons for this is that societies in which honour crimes are most commonly committed against LGBT individuals widely accept the culturally – and religiously – based belief that they are sexually perverse and their condemnation by law is therefore justifiable. As these crimes are rarely contested and largely under-reported, little information about their incidence and extent is available to researchers. Further, they reflect and reinforce deeply rooted patriarchal values and norms that manifest in the legal and military **policies** of progressive secular states as well as repressive, non-secular societies. Addressing the gap in the research will not only foreground the issue of honour crimes committed against LGBT individuals as an act that constitutes dishonouring community’s to advance LGBT as a new sex-positive category of identity. Such research is of critical importance to the advancement of policies that protect LGBT individuals’ rights and interests.

Keywords: ‘honour’, LGBT, gender, culture, dishonour, Islam, patriarchy

Case Study

Who would have known that my destiny would be sealed outside of a café near the Bosphorus **Strait** in Istanbul, Turkey, when I was just 26 years old? I was a physics student and

an activist who represented the gay community for my country at the international gay gathering in San Francisco. This political involvement aimed to challenge my society's traditional prejudice against gay people and promote a more liberal, just, and contemporary view of sexuality. However, my family thought I suffered from 'the gay disease' and accused me of dishonouring my family by my sexual orientation. They insisted that I go to doctors and consult an Imam (the head of a Mosque) to get cured. I resisted, which put me in a position of danger. My family's threat to terminate my life was finally carried out when I left my apartment to get ice cream at a café. My father had pursued me from 600 miles away and gunned me down as I attempted to flee. I was left for dead and my family did not take my body home for a proper Islamic burial. This was how my father, who stands accused of killing me, restored the 'honour' in our family name. Although I have died, the story of my life and circumstances of my death remain and Ahmet Yildiz will forever be my name (Black, 2008; Cohan, 2010).

Introduction

Although crimes of 'honour' against LGBT individuals have received more attention in academia and mainstream media in recent years, they remain to a large extent invisible and under-recognized. Interestingly, I was unable to find any academic material on 'honour' crimes that focused on LGBT people. The story of Ahmet Yildiz is, in fact, one of the few documented cases of an 'honour' killing against an LGBT individual. This lack of material in part reflects the lack of consensus as to whether honour crimes should be defined as a gender-based phenomenon or a culture-based anomaly, which may impede comprehensive analyses of these crimes. Further, the proscriptions that certain secular as well as non-secular societies adhere to are such that individuals in these societies are reluctant to even acknowledge that LGBT identities actually exist.

This paper will address the gap in the research by referencing academic literature, reports and films to examine honour crimes against LBGT individuals and relate these crimes to the larger issue of LGBT rights. Therein, it will focus on the legal, cultural and religious contexts in which these crimes occur as well as the deeply-rooted beliefs and patriarchal gender constructs upon which they are predicated. In addition, it will investigate state **policies** and judicial deliberations that legitimize and perpetuate honour killings.

It should be noted that although this paper concentrates on non-secular Islamic states and secular states heavily influenced by Islam, honour crimes are by no means an exclusively Islamic practice, are not fundamental to the religion, and certainly do not occur in all Muslim societies.