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1.8.2. Societal attitude and treatment by the state

Somalia is a Muslim nation. Almost 100 percent of the Somali population is Sunni Muslim.771 This is relevant regarding gay life in Somalia, because according to fundamental Islamic provisions, homosexuality is considered a sin and incurs the strongest condemnation of all prohibited forms of sexuality.772

According to Somalia expert Hoehne, everyday life of LGBTQI+ is characterised by constant hiding. Society does not tolerate homosexuality or any form of sexuality deviating from the heterosexual norm. Homosexuality, transgender and the like are considered an 'illness'. People do not believe that a person is born that way but that the 'deviant' sexual orientation is acquired and contiguous. Parents would try to 'cure' their children, if necessary by force. If a person is suspected of violating the heterosexual norms firmly in place in Somalia - backed by Islam - his/her own family will start exercising pressure. First, deviant children are beaten or otherwise abused at home. Second, they can be incarcerated in houses called 'dhaqan celis' - 'return to culture' - on behalf of their parents. 'Dhaqan celis' are privately owned 'correction facilities' which are guarded. Inmates are chained and cannot leave. 'Treatment' consists of reading the Koran to them. In those houses, which are gender-segregated, boys or girls frequently suffer abuse, including beating, starvation and rape. Persons considered 'gay' or 'trans' - in Somali, the term 'khaniis' is used for all LGBTQI+ persons - are not taken seriously. If they complain about abuse, neither parents nor authorities would receive the claim. If 'treatment' does not work, families can decide to have their LGBTQI+ members killed. Even parents may order someone to assassinate them.773

LGBTQI+ persons face stigmatisation.774 Still according to Somalia expert Hoehne, gay men, for instance, are not considered men by their own parents and are excluded from learning gender-specific skills. They are also excluded from inheritance. If a person is suspected of being LGBTQI+, this person will face harassment and exclusion. Somalis wearing gender-nonconforming clothing may be harassed in public. Those who cannot flee Somalia are forced to conform to heterosexual norms. Typically, they have to marry and produce offspring. If their outward appearance is questioned, they fear for their lives.775

Not only homosexuality/queerness is banned, but also any public discussion of LGBTQ+ issues.776 There is also no open discussion about most sexually transmitted diseases and LGBTQI+ cannot access healthcare for problems specifically related to their sexual orientations.777 Medical personnel and also police and other security forces, as a rule, conform to heteronormative orientations. As of 2023, '[t]here were few, very discreet, and mostly online-

based LGBTQI+ organizations that held events.’778

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