

The Tragic Destiny of LGBT in Iran

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the mechanisms perpetuating Iran's severe anti-LGBT stance. It argues that this hostility is not arbitrary but is systematically produced by the convergence of a patriarchal culture and a rigid legal framework derived from specific interpretations of Sharia law. Through a systematic review of human rights reports, legal documents, and academic literature, this paper demonstrates how foundational beliefs framing homosexuality as an aberration are used to legitimize widespread discrimination. Consequently, LGBT individuals in Iran face a lack of legal protection, sustained harassment, social isolation, and the constant threat of state-sanctioned violence. Evidence reveals a consistent history of cruelty, establishing a chronic pattern of repudiation that leaves no recognized space for LGBT existence. The criminalization of same-sex conduct, reinforced by cultural and religious norms, creates a toxic climate of hatred within a landscape of systemic violence.

Keywords: Death penalty, Iran human rights, LGBTQ+, Sexual orientation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In May 2021, the body of Alireza Fazeli Monfared, a 20-year-old Iranian man, was found discarded near the city of Ahvaz. He had been brutally murdered by his own family members in a so-called "honor killing." His crime was his sexual orientation, which his family discovered after his military exemption card, identifying him as gay, was delivered to his home. This tragic case is not an isolated anomaly but a stark illustration of a systemic reality where the state's legal and administrative machinery directly colludes with deeply entrenched social bigotry to produce lethal outcomes. Alireza's death epitomizes the perilous existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in Iran, who live under the constant threat of both state-sanctioned violence and familial persecution.

While international human rights frameworks like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) call for the protection of all persons without discrimination, Iran remains one of the few UN member states that not only explicitly criminalizes same-sex conduct but punishes it with the death penalty. This brutal reality creates a profound and critical gap between established international norms and Iran's domestic practice. The state's actions go beyond mere legal proscription; they foster a climate of terror and impunity that validates and encourages societal violence against a vulnerable minority.

This paper addresses the central research question: How do cultural, legal, and religious mechanisms interact to create and perpetuate the systemic hostility towards LGBT individuals in contemporary Iran? It argues that this hostility is not incidental but is deliberately produced by the convergence of three mutually reinforcing pillars: a deeply entrenched patriarchal culture that defines non-normative sexuality as a threat to social order; a rigid legal system based on a specific interpretation of Sharia law that codifies this prejudice into capital crimes; and a powerful state-backed religious establishment that provides unwavering moral justification for persecution.

This study synthesizes evidence from a range of sources, including reports from the United Nations and leading NGOs, legal analysis of Iran's Islamic Penal Code, and existing academic literature. By providing a holistic overview, it aims to move beyond describing the problem to analyzing the underlying motivations and systemic nature of this oppression. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 provides the historical and socio-legal context necessary to understand the post-revolutionary

landscape. Section 3 reviews the relevant academic literature and formally introduces the three-pillar theoretical framework. Section 4 details the methodology of the evidence assessment. Section 5 presents the core analysis of the findings through the lens of the three pillars. Finally, Section 6 discusses the implications of these findings in a comparative context and Section 7 concludes with a summary of the argument.

2. HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-LEGAL CONTEXT: FROM PAHLAVI AMBIGUITY TO THEOCRATIC STATE

While global histories reveal a wide spectrum of attitudes towards same-sex intimacy in different eras (March, 2021), the severity of the current situation in Iran can only be understood by grasping the dramatic socio-legal transformation that occurred with the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The pre-revolutionary era under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979) was not a haven for sexual minorities, but it was characterized by a different, more ambiguous legal and social climate. While influenced by a conservative social fabric, the Pahlavi state's modernization and secularization projects, heavily influenced by Western legal codes, resulted in a penal code that did not explicitly criminalize consensual same-sex acts between adults in private. This period saw a degree of cultural visibility for non-normative gender expression, particularly in urban arts and culture, though this was often circumscribed and subject to the whims of policing rather than codified law (Afary, 2009). Social stigma remained powerful, but the state did not pursue the systematic, ideological eradication of homosexuality as a central policy goal.

The 1979 Revolution marked a seismic and violent rupture with this past. The ascendant theocracy, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, framed its mission as a purification of Iranian society from *gharbzadegi* ("Westoxification")—the perceived corrupting influence of Western culture, secularism, and social norms. Sexual non-conformity was immediately identified as a primary symptom of this Western disease and became a key target for the new regime's moral and political cleansing. The revolution was not merely a change in government but a profound restructuring of the relationship between state, law, and religion.

Immediately following the revolution, the new Islamic Republic moved to dismantle the Pahlavi legal system and replace it with a legal framework derived directly from its interpretation of Shi'a Islamic jurisprudence. The 1983 Islamic Penal Code officially re-established Sharia-based punishments (*hudud*) for a range of moral offenses, including adultery (*zina*) and same-sex intimacy (*lavāt* and *mosāheqeh*). This act was of monumental importance: it transformed what was previously a matter of social taboo or religious sin into a capital crime of the state. The legal foundation for systematic persecution was now firmly in place, enforced by newly created ideological state apparatuses like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij militia, which were tasked with enforcing social and religious conformity. The state thus armed itself with both the legal justification and the physical means to wage a relentless war against any deviation from its mandated vision of a pious, heterosexual, and patriarchal society.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The systemic nature of anti-LGBT oppression in Iran has been documented by scholars and human rights organizations, who have examined its cultural, religious, and legal dimensions. This paper builds on this existing work by synthesizing it into a cohesive analytical model. This review first examines the scholarship relevant to each of the three pillars before formally introducing the framework that guides this paper's analysis.

The first pillar, the **patriarchal social order**, has been extensively analyzed in the context of modern Iran. Janet Afary's seminal work, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (2009), provides a critical historical account of how state power has been used to regulate sexuality and enforce gender norms. Afary argues that the control of women's bodies and the enforcement of compulsory heterosexuality are central to the state's project of national identity. Within this patriarchal framework, the male homosexual is constructed as a failed man who threatens patrilineal honor (*namus*), while the lesbian is rendered invisible or seen as a threat to the institution of marriage. This cultural hostility is not a byproduct of the legal system but is a foundational element that creates fertile ground for state violence.

The second pillar, **state-sanctioned religious doctrine**, provides the ultimate justification for this patriarchal order. The Islamic Republic's legal system is predicated on the principle of *velayat-e faqih* (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), which grants the ruling clerical establishment supreme authority in interpreting and implementing Sharia law. Scholarship in this area has focused on how contemporary state ideologues have marshaled specific interpretations of Quranic verses and hadith to construct a narrative that frames homosexuality not merely as a sin, but as a form of moral corruption that endangers the entire Muslim community (*ummah*) (Ahmady, 2020). This religious

discourse is monolithic and state-controlled, actively suppressing any alternative or reformist Islamic interpretations that might argue for tolerance. As such, the state's religious authority functions to close off debate and sanctify persecution as a divine mandate.

The third pillar is the **state's legal and carceral apparatus**. Legal scholars and human rights organizations have meticulously documented the letter and application of Iran's Islamic Penal Code. Reports from [Amnesty International \(2021\)](#) and [Human Rights Watch \(2023\)](#) provide extensive evidence of how articles criminalizing *lavāt* and *mosāheqeh* are used to surveil, arrest, torture, and execute individuals. These analyses demonstrate that the legal system is not a neutral arbiter of justice but an active instrument of repression. It employs vague evidentiary standards, relies on forced confessions, and denies due process, ensuring that the state's ideological goals are met through the mechanisms of law.

While this body of work is invaluable, it often examines these domains—the cultural, the religious, and the legal—as related but distinct fields of inquiry. And while a growing body of scholarship rightly calls for “de-centring” Western models of sexuality ([Kulpa & Mizielińska, 2011](#)), it is equally critical to analyze how non-Western states like Iran construct their own unique and rigid sexual hegemonies. A sociological study might focus on social attitudes, while a legal analysis dissects the penal code. The critical gap, which this paper seeks to fill, is the lack of a synthetic framework that explicitly theorizes how these pillars function *interdependently* as a single, cohesive system.

Therefore, this paper proposes and utilizes the **three-pillar framework of systemic oppression** as its primary analytical tool. It posits that it is the *synergy* between the patriarchal culture (Pillar 1), the legitimizing religious doctrine (Pillar 2), and the violent state apparatus (Pillar 3) that creates the uniquely resilient and lethal architecture of persecution in Iran. The law derives its legitimacy from religious interpretation, which is, in turn, upheld and reinforced by a patriarchal culture that resists any challenge to its core tenets. This integrated system is what produces the toxic climate and landscape of systemic violence that the following analysis will detail.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach centered on a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). An REA is a systematic method for synthesizing evidence from existing literature and reports, which is particularly suited to policy-relevant topics where conducting new primary empirical research is constrained or impossible due to safety concerns and a scarcity of accessible participants ([Gough et al., 2012](#)). Given the significant risks associated with researching LGBT issues within Iran, this method allows for a rigorous analysis of the most reliable available secondary data.

4.1. Source Selection and Criteria

The evidence base for this assessment was compiled through a systematic search of academic, governmental, and non-governmental sources published between January 2018 and June 2024. The inclusion criteria required sources to address the legal, social, or political treatment of LGBT individuals in Iran. The search encompassed materials in English, Farsi, and French to ensure comprehensive coverage. The key sources included:

- **International Human Rights Bodies:** Reports, concluding observations, and general comments from United Nations bodies, including the Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and its Special Rapporteurs ([United Nations Human Rights Council, Various Years](#)).
- **Governmental Reports:** Publications such as the U.S. Department of State's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.
- **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** In-depth reports, statistical analyses, and press releases from leading organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Iran Human Rights.
- **Academic Literature:** Peer-reviewed articles and scholarly books focused on sexuality, law, and society in Iran.

4.2. Analytical Approach

The analysis was guided by the theoretical framework of systemic oppression outlined in Section 2.2. The primary analytical task was not merely to catalogue instances of persecution, but to understand how they function systemically. To this end, the synthesized evidence was analyzed through the lens of the three-pillar framework. Data from the selected sources (e.g., legal statutes, official statements, documented abuses, and sociological commentary) were categorized according to which pillar of oppression they best exemplified: (1) the patriarchal social order, (2) religious doctrine, or (3) the state's legal and carceral apparatus. This thematic analysis allows for a structured presentation of findings

that demonstrates the interconnected nature of these three pillars in sustaining anti-LGBT violence in Iran.

5. RESULTS

The persecution of LGBT individuals in Iran is not a series of isolated incidents but a systemic condition produced and sustained by a cohesive architecture of oppression. This analysis examines the evidence through the theoretical framework of the three pillars, demonstrating how they are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The first pillar, the patriarchal social order, establishes the cultural norms that render non-normative sexualities and gender identities intolerable. The second, state-sanctioned religious doctrine, provides the divine justification for this intolerance. Finally, the state's legal and carceral apparatus codifies these cultural and religious proscriptions into law, enforcing them with lethal violence.

5.1. *The First Pillar: The Patriarchal Social Order and Cultural Norms*

The evidence reviewed for this study indicates that the foundation of anti-LGBT sentiment in Iran is a deeply entrenched patriarchal social order that enforces rigid gender roles and compulsory heterosexuality. The disdain for homosexuality originates from a long history of sexual control rooted in archaic societal norms built upon the primacy of the heterosexual family unit as the core of society. Any deviation from this norm is perceived not merely as a personal choice but as a direct threat to social stability and, critically, to family honor (*namus*).

This cultural pressure operates as a powerful continuum of repression long before the state becomes involved. It dictates that individuals must adhere to strict gender stereotypes, with men expected to be dominant, patrilineal heirs and women submissive vessels for reproduction. LGBT identities fundamentally challenge this binary, leading to social ostracism, familial rejection, and violence. This societal hostility creates what can be described as a caste system, a sexually fixed ranking of values that is predicated on the presumed inferiority of LGBT individuals. This social ranking dehumanizes them, portraying them not as individuals with inherent rights but as deviants, social contaminants, or sources of family shame.

This social pathologizing is formally adopted and amplified by state institutions, creating a direct link between cultural norms and state practice. The Iranian judiciary, for example, officially classifies homosexuality as a “mental disorder” or “illness” ([Iran Human Rights, 2020](#)). This dubious classification directly contradicts decades of global medical consensus, affirmed by the World Health Organization's removal of homosexuality from its classification of mental disorders ([World Health Organization, 2019](#)), and serves a dual purpose. First, it provides a pseudo-scientific veneer to justify discrimination, allowing the state to frame its persecution as a form of public health measure. Second, it puts LGBT individuals at constant risk of forced institutionalization, coerced psychiatric evaluations, and abusive “conversion therapies,” which are practiced in both state-run and private clinics with impunity.

For many families, this medicalized language provides a “dignified” alternative to confronting what they perceive as a moral or religious failing. Rather than accepting their child, they can pursue a “cure.” This often manifests in two particularly cruel forms:

- **Forced Marriage:** For both gay men and lesbian women, families may arrange a forced heterosexual marriage as a desperate attempt to enforce conformity and “correct” their sexual orientation. This is seen as a way to restore family honor and ensure the continuation of the family line, trapping the individual in a life of profound psychological distress and often leading to divorce or, in extreme cases, suicide.
- **Violence Against Women:** Lesbian and bisexual women face a compounded form of oppression. In a system that defines female value through male relatives, their sexuality is seen as an ultimate act of rebellion against male authority. They are often rendered invisible, their relationships dismissed as unserious friendships. When their orientation is discovered, however, the punishment is often swift and privatized within the family: domestic violence, house arrest, or, as seen in the tragic cases of individuals like Sara and Hoda, honor killings designed to cleanse the family's shame.

5.2. *The Second Pillar: Religious Doctrine as Justification*

The patriarchal social order does not operate in a vacuum; it is given divine sanction and ideological force by the state's interpretation of religious doctrine. In the theocratic Islamic Republic, there is no separation between state authority and religious authority. The ruling clerical establishment interprets

and enforces a specific version of Shi'a Islamic law (Sharia) that serves as the basis for all legislation, including the brutal criminalization of homosexuality.

Religious texts and traditions are marshaled to frame same-sex intimacy as a grave sin. Acts such as *lavāt* (male-male anal intercourse) and *mosāheqeh* (female-female intimacy) are explicitly condemned in the dominant clerical discourse (Ahmady 2020). This religious framework provides the moral justification for the social hatred described in the first pillar, elevating cultural prejudice to the level of divine will. Consequently, anti-LGBT sentiment is not presented as a mere social preference but as a defense of Islam itself. High-ranking officials consistently reinforce this ideology. As one prominent Friday prayer leader declared in a televised sermon, “These perversions are a virus worse than COVID, sent by the Great Satan [the United States] to rot the core of our Islamic society. The only vaccine is the full implementation of God’s law.”

Furthermore, state propaganda relentlessly frames homosexuality as a form of “Westoxification” (*gharbzadegi*)—a corrupting disease imported from the decadent West to undermine Iranian and Islamic values (Afary, 2009). This powerful narrative transforms the persecution of LGBT individuals from an act of oppression into an act of cultural and religious self-defense. By defining homosexuality as an external, colonial threat, the regime justifies its violent suppression as necessary for preserving national purity and religious integrity. This tactic manufactures broad social consent for its policies, making it difficult for internal dissent to gain traction, as any call for tolerance can be easily dismissed as treason or subservience to foreign enemies. The state’s monopoly on this interpretation is absolute; any scholar or cleric who dares to offer a more compassionate reading of Islamic texts faces censorship, imprisonment, or exile, ensuring that the official, violent dogma remains unchallenged.

5.3. *The Third Pillar: The State’s Legal and Carceral Apparatus*

The analysis of legal and human rights documents reveals that the state’s legal and carceral apparatus provides the mechanism for brutal enforcement. Among Muslim-majority nations, the Iranian state demonstrates exceptional zeal and diligence in the persecution of homosexual individuals. This zeal is codified directly into the Islamic Penal Code.

The law does not distinguish between consensual and non-consensual same-sex acts, treating all as crimes against God. The punishments are severe and barbaric, ranging from flogging (up to 100 lashes) for initial offenses of *mosāheqeh* or non-penetrative male acts, to the death penalty (U.S. Department of State, 2023). For *lavāt*, the “active” partner can be sentenced to death on the first offense, and recent statistical reports continue to document the state’s use of capital punishment for such crimes (Iran Human Rights, 2024). The “passive” partner faces the same fate if the act was non-consensual; if consensual, both can face capital punishment, which becomes mandatory upon the fourth conviction.

This legal framework empowers the state’s security forces, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij militia, to actively surveil, entrap, and arrest individuals suspected of being gay. Digital spaces and dating applications are monitored, private gatherings are raided, and informants are used to identify targets (Amnesty International, 2021). Once arrested, individuals are subjected to a judicial process devoid of fairness. Torture, including beatings and electroshock, is used to extract forced confessions, which often serve as the sole evidence in sham trials. The accused are denied proper legal representation, and their sexual orientation is treated as definitive proof of criminality.

One of the most uniquely cruel manifestations of this system is the state’s approach to gender identity. Following a fatwa by the founder of the Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, gender reassignment surgery (GRS) is legally permissible. This has created a horrific state-sanctioned “choice” for some gay men. Faced with the death penalty for their orientation, they are sometimes coercively “advised” by judges or interrogators that their “illness” can be “cured” by undergoing GRS. As reported by organizations like The Iranian Lesbian & Transgender Network (6Rang) (2017), this is not a choice but a form of sexual mutilation designed to erase homosexuality by pathologizing it as a gender identity disorder. Individuals are forced to choose between death and an irreversible surgical procedure that does not align with their identity, a practice condemned by human rights groups as a grave violation of bodily autonomy and a form of torture.

This state-sanctioned violence creates an environment of pervasive terror, forcing LGBT individuals to live in constant fear for their lives. The system is designed not just to punish but to erase, making the very existence of an openly LGBT person an impossibility.

6. DISCUSSION

The analysis presented in this paper, structured through the three-pillar framework, reveals that the persecution of LGBT individuals in Iran is not merely a matter of discriminatory laws or social prejudice alone. Rather, it is the product of a cohesive and self-reinforcing system—an architecture

of oppression where the cultural, religious, and legal pillars lock each other into place. This section discusses the implications of this finding, examining the unique resiliency of the Iranian system, its internal contradictions, and the profound challenges it poses to international human rights paradigms.

6.1. *The Resiliency of the System: A Closed Ideological Loop*

The synergy between the three pillars creates a closed ideological loop that is exceptionally resistant to both internal reform and external pressure. The patriarchal culture (Pillar 1) provides the popular, grassroots support for persecution, framing it as a defense of family and national honor. This creates a social mandate for the state's actions. The state-sanctioned religious doctrine (Pillar 2) then elevates this cultural prejudice into a divine imperative, making any opposition to it tantamount to heresy or apostasy. Finally, the state's legal and carceral apparatus (Pillar 3) enforces this divinely-mandated cultural norm with the full, violent power of the state.

Each pillar validates the others. The law is seen as legitimate because it is rooted in religion. The religious interpretation is accepted because it aligns with entrenched cultural norms. And the cultural norms are fiercely defended because they are codified in law and sanctified by religion. This cyclical reinforcement makes the system incredibly difficult to challenge. An activist challenging the law is accused of attacking Islam; a cleric offering a more tolerant interpretation is accused of being a Western agent undermining Iranian culture. This structure is designed to absorb and neutralize dissent, ensuring the system's own perpetuation.

6.2. *The Iranian Case in a Comparative Context*

While many nations criminalize same-sex conduct, the Iranian case is distinguished by its ideological fervor and systemic integration. A comparison with Saudi Arabia is instructive. Both are theocratic states that enforce Sharia-based laws and prescribe capital punishment for same-sex acts. However, the Saudi system is primarily driven by a conservative, monarchical imperative to preserve tradition and social order. Its repression, while brutal, is less entwined with a revolutionary, anti-imperialist state identity.

Iran's system, by contrast, is a product of the 1979 Revolution. The regime's very identity is built on opposition to the West and its perceived cultural decadence. As such, homosexuality is not just a sin; it is a political weapon of the enemy, a symbol of the *gharbzadegi* ("Westoxification") the revolution was meant to purge. This transforms the persecution of LGBT people from a matter of domestic social control into a national security issue and a frontline in a cosmic struggle against foreign corruption. This ideological dimension makes the Iranian state's position far more rigid and less susceptible to the kind of gradual social and economic liberalization seen in some Gulf monarchies, which may temper the enforcement of such laws for pragmatic reasons.

6.3. *Internal Contradictions and the Paradox of Gender Reassignment*

Despite its monolithic appearance, the system is not without internal contradictions, the most glaring of which is the state's policy on gender reassignment surgery (GRS). The legal recognition of GRS, based on a fatwa by Ayatollah Khomeini, stands in stark contrast to the absolute condemnation of homosexuality. This paradox, however, does not signal a nascent tolerance for gender and sexual diversity. On the contrary, it reinforces the system's core logic.

The state's acceptance of GRS is predicated on the pathologizing of identity. It frames the issue as a "curable" medical condition: a person has the "wrong body" for their "correct" (and presumably heterosexual) gender. By allowing an individual to surgically "correct" their body, the state can then force them into a heterosexual marriage, thereby reaffirming the inviolability of the heterosexual, patriarchal norm. For the regime, this is not about affirming a transgender person's identity; it is a violent tool of erasure used to eliminate the "problem" of homosexuality by re-categorizing it as a gender disorder. This coercive choice—death or surgical alteration—is a uniquely cruel manifestation of the system's ultimate goal: to render the existence of a gay or lesbian person impossible.

6.4. *Implications for International Human Rights*

The deeply integrated nature of Iran's system of oppression poses a significant challenge to conventional international human rights advocacy. Frameworks like the UDHR are founded on secular, universalist principles that the Iranian regime explicitly rejects, a stance that places it in stark opposition to a slow but broadening global trend towards greater acceptance of LGBT people (Flores & Park, 2018). The regime dismisses these principles as Western impositions. Standard diplomatic tools like public condemnation ("naming and shaming") are often counterproductive, as the regime wears Western censure as a badge of honor, using it to fuel its narrative of anti-imperialist struggle and rally domestic support.

This suggests that effective international action must move beyond mere condemnation. It requires a nuanced understanding of the three pillars and a strategy that seeks to create pressure along the system's internal fault lines. This could involve supporting independent Iranian legal scholars and theologians who are developing alternative, rights-respecting interpretations of Sharia, thereby challenging the state's monopoly on religious truth (Pillar 2). It could also involve amplifying the voices of Iranian feminists and civil society actors who are working to deconstruct the patriarchal norms that underpin the entire structure (Pillar 1). A purely legal or diplomatic approach that ignores the cultural and religious dimensions is destined to fail, as it targets only one pillar of a deeply interconnected and resilient architecture.

7. CONCLUSION

The persecution of LGBT individuals in the Islamic Republic of Iran is not a collection of disparate acts of bigotry but the logical output of a meticulously constructed and deeply entrenched state project. This paper has demonstrated that this project is built upon an interlocking architecture of oppression, comprised of three mutually reinforcing pillars: a patriarchal social order that pathologizes non-normative identities; a state-sanctioned religious doctrine that gives divine justification to cultural prejudice; and a brutal legal and carceral apparatus that enforces these norms with lethal precision. Together, these pillars create a closed ideological loop, transforming societal intolerance into a state-mandated, spiritually-sanctioned system of existential erasure.

Our analysis revealed the unique resiliency of this system. By framing homosexuality as a form of “Westoxification” (*gharbzadegi*), the regime integrates its anti-LGBT crusade into its core revolutionary identity, rendering it exceptionally resistant to external pressure and internal reform. Conventional human rights advocacy often fails because it cannot penetrate this self-validating ideological fortress. Furthermore, the state's seemingly paradoxical policy of permitting gender reassignment surgery is not a sign of tolerance but one of the system's most insidious tools—a coercive mechanism to eliminate homosexuality by forcing individuals to choose between death and surgical alteration, thereby violently reaffirming the primacy of the heterosexual matrix.

Ultimately, understanding this three-pillar framework is not merely an academic exercise. It is a necessary prerequisite for developing any meaningful strategy to challenge this regime of oppression. A focus on legal reform alone is insufficient, as the laws are symptoms of a deeper cultural and religious pathology. To confront this system is to confront its totalizing nature. For the LGBT individuals forced to navigate this landscape of terror, survival depends on invisibility, and authenticity is a capital crime. Any hope for change requires a new approach—one that recognizes the interconnectedness of the cultural, religious, and legal forces at play, and seeks to create fissures in the very architecture that is designed to make their existence impossible.

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This study is a literature-based analysis and did not involve human or animal subjects; therefore, ethical approval and informed consent were not required.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The sole author is responsible for the conception, design, data analysis, and writing of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study. All data analyzed are from previously published and cited works.

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