

ILGA World* mourns Muhsin Hendricks, activist and first openly gay Imam

The Imam was killed this morning in what we fear may be a hate crime. He supported and mentored many around the world, and in November 2024 he spoke at the ILGA World Conference in Cape Town

CAPE TOWN, 15 February 2025 - ILGA World is shocked to learn about the assassination of Muhsin Hendricks, a South African Islamic scholar who has often been described as the world's first openly gay Imam.

According to reports, Hendricks was shot and killed this morning in the city of Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Although investigation is ongoing and police claims that the motive for the murder is unknown, unconfirmed reports claim that he was in town to marry a lesbian couple.

“The ILGA World family is in deep shock at the news of the murder of Muhsin Hendricks, and calls on authorities to thoroughly investigate what we fear may be a hate crime”, said Julia Ehrt, executive director at ILGA World. “He supported and mentored so many people in South Africa and around the world in their journey to reconcile with their faith, and his life has been a testament to the healing that solidarity across communities can bring in everyone’s lives. Our condolences go out to all who have been touched by his presence in all these years.” Muhsin Hendricks became the first Imam in the world to come out as gay back in 1996, the same year when he founded the organisation The Inner Circle. A long-standing activist who has worked with interfaith communities around the world, he has done independent research on Islam and sexual diversity. He recently founded the Al-Ghurbaah Foundation in Cape Town, where he served as executive director, and was also the administrator of the Compassion-centred Islam (CCI Network) for inclusive scholars and religious leaders.

In November 2024, Muhsin Hendricks was among the speakers at the 31st ILGA World Conference, which was held in Cape Town. During the opening plenary session, he spoke about the importance of interfaith communities as a healing factor for LGBTI people who struggle to reconcile with their faith, and of the solidarity he felt when in recent times people in a WhatsApp group called for the closure of his Mosque, which people branded ‘The Gay Temple.’

“To me, it is important that we stop to look at religion as the enemy,” Hendricks said during the ILGA World Conference.

“Religion is probably one of the main things that has created mental health issues and trauma within our communities, but at the same time we have narratives of queer people of faith who are talking about how religion has actually saved and healed them. But what kind of religion is that? It’s that religion where we, queer people, can disconnect from those parts that are extremist and that don’t speak to inclusivity and compassion.”

* **ILGA World** is a worldwide federation of more than 2,000 organisations from over 170 countries and territories campaigning for the human rights of people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics. <https://ilga.org>