

# LGBT rights in Sri Lanka

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Homosexuality is illegal in Sri Lanka. Punishment ranges from a fine to 10 years in prison. In certain situations, cross-dressing is tolerated. Since the 1990s their have been public efforts made to advance the rights of LGBT Sri Lankans.

## Contents

- 1 Criminal Law
- 2 Civil Rights
- 3 Family and Marriage
- 4 Transgender Issues
- 5 Media & Popular Entertainment
- 6 References

## Criminal Law

Homosexuality was made a criminal offense under the British colonial rule. Article 365A. Any person who in public or in private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any person of, any act of gross indecency with another person, shall be guilty of an offense, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years or with fine or with both and where the offense is committed by a person over 18 years of age in respect of any person under 16 years of age shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term not less than ten years and not exceeding twenty years and with a fine and shall also be ordered to pay compensation of an amount determined by court to the person in respect of whom the offense was committed for the injuries caused to such person [1] ([http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/world/sri\\_lanka/sri\\_lanka.htm](http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/world/sri_lanka/sri_lanka.htm)) . While the law is rarely directly enforced, it is often used by law enforcement and other people to harass, rape, assault and blackmail LGBT people [2] (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78875.htm>) .

## Civil Rights

As of 2008, Sri Lanka does not have any civil rights laws that address discrimination or harassment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. None of the major or minor political parties have formally endorsed any LGBT-rights proposals.

The August 2005 Emergency regulations permit the government to, "stop the publication, distribution, showing, performance or broadcast of any book, magazine, newspaper, poster, movie, play, song, radio or television program that it finds likely to cause public disorder." [3] (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78875.htm>) While press and media censorship has not formally banned LGBT-themes, per se, negative opinions tend to dominate.

In 2001, a gay right activist named Sherman de Rose was ordered to pay the "*Island*" newspaper legal fees for his rejected complaint against the publication to the Sri Lankan Press Council [4] (<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/asia/srilanka2.html>) . The newspaper had printed a letter to the editor, which advocated submitting lesbians to convicted rapists in an effort to 'cure' them [5] (<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/asia/srilanka2.html>) . In rejecting Rose's complaint against the newspaper, the Council stated that lesbianism is, "an act of sadism" itself, that homosexuality is an immoral and abnormal crime and that, as a man, Rose had no grounds to complain [6] (<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k1/asia/srilanka2.html>) .

In 1995, "Companions on a Journey" was founded by a group of LGBT Sri Lankans to advance LGBT human rights. It was later joined by the "Womens Support Group" and "Equal Ground". The organizations have organized conferences, yearly pride festivals, promoted AIDS-HIV education and lobbied for LGBT civil rights, especially the reform of the anti-gay criminal law [7] (<http://www.globalgayz.com/sri-news08-01.html#article1>) .

As of 2008, none of the major or minor political parties have endorsed LGBT-civil rights issues.

## Family and Marriage

Sri Lanka does not reconize same-sex marriages or any similar civil union. It is unknown if a gay person or a same-sex couple would be allowed to formally adopt or have custody of children.

## Transgender Issues

While there is some traditional transgender practices associated with certain rituals, transgender people are victims of harassment and discrimination [8] (<http://www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/ccies/lk.php#homoerot>) . The term, "ponnaya" is a negative word often used against transgender people or effeminate men [9] (<http://www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/ccies/lk.php#homoerot>) . Oftentimes they are forced to become prostitutes, or find work as a "makeup experts" or to work in bridal or fashion stores [10] (<http://www.indiana.edu/~kinsey/ccies/lk.php#homoerot>) .

## Media & Popular Entertainment

- Flying with one Wing (2002) - Asoka Handagama wrote and directed this film about a Sri Lankan woman who passes for a man in the society and in her personal relationships [11] ([http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/world/sri\\_lanka/sri\\_lanka.htm](http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/world/sri_lanka/sri_lanka.htm)) .

## References

- Womens Support Group (<http://www.wsglanka.com/>)
- Equal Ground (<http://www.equal-ground.org>)
- SodomyLaws: Sri Lanka ([http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/world/sri\\_lanka/sri\\_lanka.htm](http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/world/sri_lanka/sri_lanka.htm))

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_rights\\_in\\_Sri\\_Lanka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Sri_Lanka)"

Categories: LGBT rights by country | LGBT stubs

- This page was last modified on 11 November 2008, at 18:40.
  - All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.)
- Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit charity.