



## Policy Brief

# Integrated Safety and Security Mechanism for Indonesian Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer (LBQ) Women and Transgender Men Activists

This policy brief is based on a research project funded by SHAPE SEA and carried out by Vica Krisilia Larasati.



## 1. Introduction

Defending LGBTQ rights in Indonesia is challenging as LGBTQ activists have to deal with direct implications targeting their sexual and gender identity. Arguments that reject LGBTQ rights as human rights are often said to oppose national identity. This is an opinion which is often shared even among fellow human rights activist and other social movements. As a result, LGBTQ activists are constantly victims of human rights violations and discriminatory acts. Moreover, they are not entitled to the same fulfillment and enjoyment of rights as other Indonesians. In addition, the absence of legal recognition and protection as well as the state's ignorance towards LGBTQ activism creates high-risk situations. Meanwhile, LBQ women and transgender man activists are dealing with layers of discrimination since they were born with female-bodied characteristics, but simultaneously are less visible and recognized amongst women and LGBTQ movements. This, in turn, has caused them to remain mostly ignored, which has significantly contributed to their vulnerability towards violations and discriminatory acts - both in personal and public arena - compared to gay men, bisexual men, and transgender women.

Being a lesbian, bisexual woman, queer, or a transgender man is assumed to be against common standards with regards to femininity, and the common role of female-born, heterosexual women as 'good women' in society. This stigma has pushed society, and often the parents of LBQ women and transgender man activists, into committing discriminatory acts, including forced marriage, forced 'female' physical appearance, forced participation in converting therapy (either psychology- or religious-based), and even corrective rape. These are regarded as ways to 'help children get back to normal life' by definition of a feminine heterosexual women who is married with a man and has children.

Most of the LGBTQ communities/organizations do not have financial securities to provide support mechanism for their staff/volunteers during activism activities. As a result, some staff/volunteers are responsible for several roles within their organization due to minimum interest from other LGBTQ community members to actively engage in the organization. Also, most of the LBQ women and transgender activists have to work in two or more organizations at the same time to be able to cover their basic needs. These situations affect the organizational sustainability and ability in realizing the rights of LGBTQ communities. Meanwhile, few LGBTQ communities/organizations provide support to their staff/volunteer, which might be partially explained by the good networking in provincial or national level. Most of the LBQ women and transgender man activists are not aware of greater risks, which resulted in minimum understanding of integrated securities and protection mechanisms in doing

their activism. Self-identification as women human rights defenders which affects their knowledge on risk situation that directly threaten their daily and working life. Second, significant events towards the works of LGBTQ activist affect their awareness of risky situations that can directly threaten their daily and working life.

### 2. Conclusion

LBTQ women and Transgender man activism remains hidden behind layers of discrimination and willful ignorance which challenges their physical and mental life; and results in high levels of chronic stress, exposure to trauma, and enormous workloads. This is almost universally accepted as inevitable side-effect of activism. Therefore, it is necessary for LGBTQ communities/organizations to become a safe and supportive space for their staff/volunteers do their activism while still able to enjoy life without sacrificing livelihoods, health, or happiness.

### 3. Recommendations

1. Urge LGBTQ communities/organizations to raise awareness amongst staff/volunteers including their partner/parents regarding possible risk situations and integrated securities and protection mechanisms while doing their activism in personal, societies and on a state level;
2. Urge LGBTQ communities/organizations to recognize, formalize, and make the integrated securities mechanisms that covers three interconnected domains — physical security, digital security and self-care (physical and psychological protection) through their policies, program and/or budgeting;
3. Urge LGBTQ communities/organizations to build network and engage with women or other human rights communities and/or organizations with similar works with regards to overcoming challenges and risk situations.

#### Relevant publications

Agustine, R. 2013. *Bukanlagirahasiasunyi: gerakan lesbian di Indonesia pada era Reformasi (2000-2012). Mendengar Suara Lesbian Indonesia: Kumpulan Buah Pikir Para Aktivis Feminis dan Pluralis*. Jakarta: Ardhanary Institute.

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Human Rights Watch. 2016. *These Political Games Ruin Our Lives: Indonesia's LGBT Community Under Threat*. USA. pp 1-3.