

## **PaykanArtCar Strongly Condemns Iran's Proposed Internet Bill for its Surveillance and Censorship of LGBTQ+ People**

**(Washington, D.C.)** — PaykanArtCar, a non-profit organization collaborating with artists to advocate for the LGBTQ+ community and human rights in Iran, strongly urges the international community to call on Iran to rescind its proposed internet protection bill. The legislation will enhance state surveillance, quash freedom of expression and deprive the Iranian LGBTQ+ community of its final refuge.

The Iranian Parliament recently moved to ratify the draconian Regulatory System for Cyberspace Services Bill which would deal a fatal blow to online freedoms in Iran and especially the [LGBTQ+ community](#). The bill will place the online space under strict surveillance by the regime and the [Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps \(IRGC\)](#) - Iran's state-police notoriously known for its violent persecution of marginalized communities. The IRGC's oppressive scrutiny will erase the last vestiges of public sphere where the Iranian queer community can freely express itself and support one another.

The legislation will also block websites and platforms run by foreign companies, require citizens to use IDs to access the internet, and criminalize Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). The provision on VPNs will particularly impact the LGBTQ+ community as they are an essential tool for protecting anonymity online, circumventing existing online censorship and for the documenting of human rights abuses. Additionally, the IRGC and other state-controlled agencies will be given the power to control [international gateways](#) that connect Iran to the internet and shut down websites with total impunity.

The LGBTQ+ community in Iran lives under a pervasive persecution. Published this week, the [US State Department's 2021 Human Rights Report](#) found that acts of violence, criminalization and other abuses are both condoned and committed by the Iranian regime. LGBTQ+ people are considered to be "moral deviants" on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. The report highlights the forced "corrective treatments" LGBTQ+ people are forced to undergo.

In addition to public harassment, LGBTQ+ people also often face abuse within their families. In some cases, they are subjected to so-called "honor killings". These atrocious acts of violence are committed or ordered by a husband, father, brother, or another relative to punish a family member deemed to have damaged the family's reputation, according to [Human Rights Watch](#). The Iranian penal code legally protects those who perpetrate these murders.

Commenting on the proposed regulation, PaykanArtCar Executive Director Hiva Feizi said:

*"This new bill will effectively destroy the last remaining safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community and muzzle human rights activists who document their persecution and abuse. The internet sheds light on the persecution of the LGBTQ+ community in Iran. Without it, abhorrent acts of violence against LGBTQ+ people could go unnoticed - while perpetrators run free. The international community must demand that Iran immediately rescind the bill and hold the government accountable for its countless human rights violations."*