

Brief on the Situation of LGBTIQ+ People in Uzbekistan in 2026

Article 120 of the Criminal Code, Mass Raids,
Forced Invasive Examinations, and the
Lack of Effective Protection
from Torture



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Period: 2026, taking into account the official dynamics of Article 120 cases for 2020–2025

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Focus: Article 120 of the Criminal Code, mass raids, torture and degrading treatment, procedural violations, and Uzbekistan's international obligations.

1. Executive Summary

The situation of LGBTIQ+ people in Uzbekistan in 2026 is characterized by increasing risks related to the application of Article 120 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This provision criminalizes consensual sexual relations between men and provides for punishment in the form of restriction of liberty for a period of one to three years, or imprisonment for up to three years.

Official data from the state system indicate a sharp increase in the number of cases under Article 120: 23 cases in 2020, 17 cases in 2021, 17 cases in 2022, 17 cases in 2023, 48 cases in 2024, and 71 cases in the first nine months of 2025 alone. This trend points to an intensification of criminal law pressure and requires specific attention from international mechanisms, diplomatic missions, and international financial institutions.

In 2026, particular concern is raised by reports of regular raids in Tashkent Region, where people rent country houses for private recreation. According to monitoring data, law enforcement officers enter such premises at night, carry out mass detentions, demand that detainees unlock their phones, use personal information for threats and pressure, and subsequently refer detainees for forced invasive forensic medical examinations, including anal examinations.

These examinations should not be regarded as ordinary procedural measures, but as a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and, in some cases, as torture.

Thus, Article 120 is not only a discriminatory criminal provision, but also an infrastructure of systemic vulnerability that creates conditions for raids, threats, corruption, torture, and the impossibility of an effective complaint.

2. Core Theory of the Violation

Article 120 creates the following chain of violations:

criminalization of private life → fear of exposure → inability to file a safe complaint → raids and detentions → forced access to phones → use of personal data for pressure → forced examinations → initiation of criminal cases → corrupt closure of some cases → lack of investigation into torture → repetition of the practice.

This chain shows that the problem is not limited to isolated incidents of police abuse. It reflects a system in which a criminal provision creates a constant threat to real or perceived LGBTIQ+ people and effectively deprives them of access to protection.

Article 120 should therefore be considered simultaneously as:

- a provision that violates the right to private life;
- a discriminatory criminal law provision;
- a factor contributing to arbitrary detention;
- a source of torture and ill-treatment;
- a tool of extortion and blackmail;
- a barrier to access to justice;
- an obstacle to access to medical, psychological and social support;
- a risk factor for international projects in the fields of health care, digitalization, social protection, employment, education, tourism, infrastructure and local development.

3. Methodology and Limitations

This brief is based on:

1. official data on Article 120;
2. monitoring data for 2026;
3. reports of three major raids in Tashkent Region;
4. analysis of Uzbekistan’s national legislation;
5. international standards concerning the prohibition of torture, the right to private life, non-discrimination, the right to legal counsel, and the right to a fair trial;
6. analysis of the mandates and environmental and social policies of international financial institutions.

Given the high level of risk for victims, this brief does not disclose names, exact addresses, case numbers, personal data, or any other information that could lead to the identification of individuals.

4. Official Dynamics of Article 120 Cases

Non-public official state data on Article 120 indicate the following:

Year	Number of cases under Article 120
2020	23
2021	17
2022	17
2023	17
2024	48
First nine months of 2025	71

This trend demonstrates several important patterns.

First, in 2021–2023, official figures remained at the level of 17 cases per year. In 2024, the number of cases increased to 48, almost three times higher than in each of the previous three

years. In the first nine months of 2025 alone, there were already 71 cases, significantly exceeding the total figure for the whole of 2024.

Second, the increase in official cases does not mean that there were few violations before 2024. Rather, official statistics reflect only those cases that reached the stage of registration or procedural formalization. They do not capture detentions without the initiation of a case, threats, blackmail, extortion, unlawful phone searches, forced examinations, or cases closed through informal mechanisms.

Third, the increase in the number of cases heightens the risk that Article 120 is being used not only for punishment, but also as an instrument of pressure. State statistics show formal criminal law activity, but do not reveal the hidden scale of fear, coercion and impunity.

Fourth, the rise in cases after 2023 should become the subject of a separate international inquiry. It is necessary to establish:

- how many people were actually detained on suspicion of violating Article 120;
- how many cases were initiated following raids;
- how many examinations were ordered in such cases;
- how many cases were terminated before reaching court;
- how many cases were closed due to the absence of elements of a crime;
- how many complaints were submitted regarding torture, threats, denial of access to a lawyer, and unlawful access to phones.

5. Raids in Tashkent Region

5.1. General Pattern

In 2026, reports were documented of regular raids in Tashkent Region, where people rent country houses for private recreation. For LGBTIQ+ people, such spaces are often one of the few ways to spend time together without public visibility and without the immediate risk of their private lives being exposed.

According to monitoring data, the raids follow a recurring pattern:

- law enforcement officers arrive at night;
- entry into the premises takes place suddenly and by force;
- those present are not informed of their procedural status;
- no clear grounds are presented for detention, inspection or search;
- people are humiliated, intimidated, and filmed;
- phones are collected from everyone and people are required to unlock them;
- private correspondence, photographs, videos and contacts are used as tools of pressure;
- people are taken to the district department of internal affairs;
- access to a lawyer is effectively blocked;
- after prolonged detention, detainees are referred for forced invasive anal examinations;
- the results of these examinations are used to initiate cases under Article 120.

This practice affects several rights at once: the inviolability of the home, the right to private life, the confidentiality of correspondence, the protection of personal data, liberty and security of person, the right to legal counsel, and the prohibition of torture.

The Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantees the protection of private life, personal data, confidentiality of correspondence, and the inviolability of the home; entry into a home, inspection, seizure and search are permitted only in cases and in the manner prescribed by law, while a search of a home requires a court decision.

5.2. Three Major Episodes in 2026

At least three major cases are known to have occurred in 2026:

- in the first case, 17 people were detained;
- in the second case, 22 people were detained;
- in the third case, 23 people were detained.

In total, these cases involved 62 detainees.

Following these raids, 34 criminal cases were initiated under Article 120:

- 15 cases in one of the episodes;
- 10 cases in the second episode;
- 9 cases in the third episode.

Eight cases reached the stage of judicial review. At least 24 cases were closed through informal and corrupt mechanisms. The status of two additional cases requires further clarification. These figures show that raids are used not only to initiate criminal cases. Even if a case is later closed, the person has already gone through detention, humiliation, threats, an invasive examination, the risk of exposure of personal information, and psychological trauma.

5.3. Why the Raids Have Systemic Significance

The raids are important not only as individual incidents. They demonstrate a broader mechanism of persecution.

1. Private space ceases to be safe.

People rent country houses precisely because public places are unsafe. If even such spaces become the target of night raids, this means the effective disappearance of a safe private sphere.

2. The phone becomes a source of criminal risk.

Private correspondence, photographs, contacts and messages are used as tools of pressure. This means that a person is at risk not only because of their actions, but also because of their digital life.

3. Group detention creates an effect of collective intimidation.

Even if criminal cases are not initiated against everyone, all detainees experience fear, threats, loss of control over their personal data, and the risk of exposure of their private lives.

4. Raids create a basis for further persecution.

Through phones and interrogations, officers may obtain information about other people, meeting places, chats and social connections.

5. Even the closure of a case does not mean restoration of rights.

A person may avoid trial, but does not receive recognition of the violation, compensation, investigation of torture, or protection from future pressure.

6. Detailed Case: Raid on a Country House with 23 Young People

One of the most illustrative cases took place at a rented country house where 23 people, approximately between the ages of 20 and 28, were spending time together. At around 2 a.m., law enforcement officers entered the premises by force.

According to the victims, the officers shouted, humiliated those present, filmed what was happening, and created an atmosphere of fear. After entering the premises, officers collected the mobile phones of everyone present. People were forced to unlock their devices, after which officers reviewed private correspondence, photographs, videos, contacts and other personal information.

All 23 people were taken to the district department of internal affairs and held there for approximately 12 hours. According to available information, they were not provided with meaningful access to a lawyer, were not given a real opportunity to contact legal counsel, were not provided with proper procedural documents, and were not ensured adequate conditions of detention, including access to water and food.

The following day, the investigator ordered a forensic medical examination. All 23 people were taken for the examination. The victims had no real possibility to refuse, to request the recusal of the experts, to demand the presence of a lawyer, or to review the decision ordering the examination. According to available information, no written voluntary consent for the invasive procedure was obtained.

The procedure itself affected an intimate bodily sphere and was accompanied by humiliating questions, photo documentation, a forced invasive rectal examination, and the presence of several medical professionals. In the context of detention, threats, lack of access to a lawyer, and the risk of criminal prosecution, such a procedure cannot be considered a voluntary medical procedure.

7. Forced Invasive (Anal) Examinations as Torture or Ill-Treatment

Forced invasive examinations must be explicitly condemned as a practice incompatible with human dignity, bodily integrity, the right to private life, and the prohibition of torture.

Such examinations bear the characteristics of torture or ill-treatment for several reasons:

7.1. State Involvement

The examinations are ordered or initiated in the context of criminal prosecution. They are carried out at the request of state authorities and used as evidence under Article 120. Therefore, this is not a matter of private violence, but of actions carried out with the participation, at the initiative, or with the acquiescence of the state.

7.2. Coercion

People are referred for examinations after night raids, detention, threats, prolonged deprivation of liberty, and denial of access to a lawyer. In such circumstances, it is impossible to speak of free and informed consent.

Even if a person does not formally offer physical resistance, this does not amount to consent. In a context of threats of criminal prosecution, exposure of personal information, additional charges or violence, any “consent” is legally defective.

7.3. Discriminatory Purpose

The examinations are not conducted for treatment, diagnosis or the protection of health. Their purpose is to obtain alleged “evidence” for criminal prosecution under a provision applied to consensual sexual relations between men.

This means that the very purpose of the procedure is discriminatory.

7.4. Lack of Evidentiary Value

Such examinations cannot reliably establish the fact of consensual sexual relations. There is a medical consensus that such examinations have no scientific basis, and the Independent Forensic Expert Group has stated that this type of examination has no value for reliably identifying findings that could be associated with consensual sexual conduct.

7.5. Humiliation and Traumatic Impact

The procedure affects an intimate bodily sphere, is carried out in conditions of fear, and is accompanied by humiliating questions and documentation of the process. For victims, this is experienced as sexualized humiliation, psychological pressure, and violence by the state.

7.6. The Use of Medicine as an Instrument of Criminal Prosecution

The involvement of medical professionals and forensic medical institutions in such procedures is of particular concern. When medicine is used not to assist a person, but to obtain evidence in a discriminatory criminal case, it undermines trust in the health-care system and creates a risk that LGBTIQ+ people will avoid seeking medical care.

This is particularly dangerous in the areas of:

- HIV prevention and treatment;
- sexual health;
- mental health;
- support following violence;
- social support;
- documentation of torture.

8. Impossibility of Effectively Challenging Torture

One of the central conclusions is that, in cases related to Article 120, victims are effectively deprived of the possibility to challenge torture and ill-treatment.

Formally, national law contains safeguards. The Constitution of Uzbekistan prohibits torture, violence, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; it also guarantees liberty and security of person. The Constitution further guarantees the right to a lawyer from the moment of actual restriction of liberty and establishes the inadmissibility of evidence obtained in violation of the law.

The Criminal Procedure Code sets limits on coercion during examinations: Article 181 provides that the compulsory use of complex methods of medical examination, as well as methods associated with severe pain, is permitted only with the consent of the person subjected to the examination.

However, in cases under Article 120, these safeguards do not function in practice.

8.1. A Complaint Creates a Risk of Self-Incrimination

A person wishing to complain about a forced examination must disclose the circumstances of a case in which they themselves may be treated as a suspect under Article 120. This makes the complaint dangerous. In practice, the victim is forced to choose between remaining silent about torture and filing a complaint at the risk of criminal prosecution.

8.2. A Complaint Creates a Risk of Exposure of Private Life

Filing a complaint may lead to the disclosure of information about sexual orientation, private life, social circles, correspondence, and attendance at closed gatherings. In the context of Uzbekistan, this may result in family violence, dismissal from work, expulsion from the home, blackmail, or public harassment.

8.3. Lawyers Are Denied Access at the Critical Moment

In many cases, access to a lawyer is denied precisely when the most serious violations occur: detention, seizure of a phone, pressure, the ordering of an examination, and the examination itself. After the procedure has already been carried out, challenging it becomes significantly more difficult.

8.4. A State Examination Is Reviewed Within the State System

The victim must complain about actions carried out within the official criminal process and the official forensic medical system. This creates a conflict of interest and reduces confidence in the possibility of an independent investigation.

8.5. Corrupt Schemes Replace Legal Protection

According to available information, some cases are closed through informal and corrupt mechanisms. This may allow a person to avoid trial, but it does not provide recognition of the violation, investigation of torture, compensation, rehabilitation, or accountability for those responsible.

8.6. A Complaint May Intensify Pressure

When victims attempt to defend their rights, they face threats of prosecution under other charges, including drug-related accusations. This turns the right to complain into a formality.

8.7. The Absence of Complaints Does Not Mean the Absence of Torture

For this reason, the absence of official complaints regarding forced examinations must not be interpreted as evidence that torture did not occur. On the contrary, it points to fear, criminalization, the risk of self-incrimination, and the absence of an effective protection mechanism.

9. National Legal Assessment

The practices described above contradict the basic guarantees provided by the Constitution and the Criminal Procedure Code of Uzbekistan.

9.1. Violation of the Prohibition of Torture and Degrading Treatment

The Constitution of Uzbekistan expressly prohibits torture, violence, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It also prohibits medical and scientific experiments without the person's consent.

Forced invasive (anal) examinations carried out after detention, threats, and without access to a lawyer are incompatible with these guarantees.

9.2. Violation of the Right to Liberty and Security of Person

Mass night-time detentions without a clear procedural status, prolonged detention at a district department of internal affairs, and lack of access to a lawyer indicate signs of arbitrary restriction of liberty.

The Constitution provides that no one may be detained or otherwise restricted in their liberty except on lawful grounds.

9.3. Violation of the Right to Private Life and Personal Data Protection

Forced unlocking of phones, review of correspondence, photographs, contacts and other personal information violate the right to private life, the confidentiality of correspondence, and the protection of personal data.

The Constitution protects these rights and allows restrictions on the confidentiality of correspondence only on the basis of law and a court decision.

9.4. Violation of the Right to Defence

Ignoring requests for access to a lawyer, conducting investigative actions without legal counsel, and denying the possibility of legal assistance at the time an examination is ordered violate the right to defence. The Constitution guarantees the right to legal assistance and access to a lawyer from the moment of actual restriction of liberty.

9.5. Violation of the Right Not to Testify Against Oneself

Forced unlocking of a phone, pressure during questioning, and forced examinations are effectively used to obtain information or evidence against the person themselves. This contradicts the logic of the right not to testify against oneself and the presumption of innocence.

9.6. Inadmissibility of Evidence

If an examination is carried out without voluntary consent, without access to a lawyer, without provision of the decision ordering the examination, without the possibility to request the recusal of experts, and under threats, its results must be considered inadmissible evidence. The Constitution expressly provides that evidence obtained in violation of the law is not admissible in the administration of justice.

10. International Legal Assessment

Uzbekistan is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Uzbekistan acceded to these treaties in 1995.

10.1. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The practices described above engage, at a minimum, the following provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

- Article 2(1) — the obligation to ensure rights without discrimination;
- Article 7 — the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- Article 9 — the right to liberty and security of person;
- Article 14 — the right to a fair trial;
- Article 17 — protection against arbitrary interference with privacy, home and correspondence;
- Article 26 — equality before the law and equal protection of the law.

10.2. Convention against Torture

In the context of forced examinations, the following provisions of the Convention against Torture are particularly relevant:

- Article 1 — the definition of torture;
- Article 2 — the obligation to prevent torture;
- Article 12 — the obligation to conduct a prompt and impartial investigation;
- Article 13 — the right to complain and to be protected from intimidation;
- Article 14 — the right to redress and rehabilitation;
- Article 15 — the prohibition on using evidence obtained as a result of torture;
- Article 16 — the obligation to prevent other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Forced invasive (anal) examinations in cases under Article 120 should therefore be assessed through the framework of the Convention against Torture, rather than being treated merely as a procedural violation.

10.3. Article 120 as a Source of Torture and Impunity

Article 120 is inconsistent with Uzbekistan's international obligations for several reasons:

1. it criminalizes consensual relations between adults in the private sphere;
2. it is applied in a discriminatory manner;
3. it creates conditions for arbitrary detention;
4. it enables forced examinations;
5. it blocks access to justice;
6. it creates a risk of self-incrimination when victims complain about torture;
7. it undermines access of LGBTIQ+ people to medical, psychological and legal assistance.

Thus, Article 120 should be addressed not only as a matter of criminal policy, but also as a question of Uzbekistan's compliance with its international obligations concerning the prohibition of torture, protection of private life, non-discrimination and the right to a fair trial.

11. Key Findings

- 1. Official data on Article 120 show a sharp increase in criminal law pressure.**
After 17 cases per year in 2021–2023, the number of cases increased to 48 in 2024 and to 71 in the first nine months of 2025 alone.
- 2. Article 120 is not only a discriminatory provision, but also a source of systemic vulnerability.**
It creates conditions for raids, threats, extortion, forced access to data, torture, and the inability to seek protection.
- 3. The raids demonstrate the mass nature of the persecution.**
In three known episodes in 2026, 62 people were detained, after which 34 criminal cases were initiated under Article 120.
- 4. Forced invasive examinations must be condemned as a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and, in some cases, as torture.**
- 5. Victims are effectively deprived of an effective complaint mechanism.**
A complaint about torture may lead to self-incrimination, exposure of private life, new threats, and further criminal prosecution.
- 6. The results of such examinations must be recognized as inadmissible evidence.**
- 7. International financial institutions should consider Article 120 and related practices as a social risk for development projects.**

12. Recommendations

12.1. To the United Nations and International Mechanisms

1. Raise the issue of the compliance of Article 120 with Uzbekistan's international obligations.
2. Consider Article 120 not only as a discriminatory provision, but also as a factor that creates conditions for torture, arbitrary detention, and denial of access to justice.
3. Request official data from the Government of Uzbekistan on:
 - the number of cases under Article 120 in 2024–2026;
 - the number of people detained during raids;
 - the number of forensic medical examinations ordered in Article 120 cases;
 - the number of complaints of torture in such cases;
 - measures taken to investigate forced examinations;
 - the number of cases closed due to the absence of elements of a crime.
4. Call for an immediate ban on forced invasive examinations.
5. Call for the review of cases in which such examinations were used as evidence.
6. Include the issue of Article 120 and forced examinations on the agenda of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee against Torture.

12.2. To Diplomatic Missions and International Partners

1. Raise the issue of Article 120 in bilateral meetings with the authorities of Uzbekistan.

2. Separately condemn forced invasive (anal) examinations as a form of torture or degrading treatment.
3. Request information on raids and mass detentions.
4. Support closed-door advocacy in order not to increase risks for victims.
5. Link criminal justice reforms to the repeal of Article 120 and the prohibition of torture.
6. Support independent lawyers, psychologists, and human rights groups working with victims.
7. Establish channels for emergency protection and relocation for people facing criminal prosecution, exposure of private life, torture, or violence.

13. Practical Advocacy Requests for Meetings

13.1. For the UN and Diplomatic Missions

1. Raise Article 120 as an issue of non-compliance with Uzbekistan's international obligations.
2. Separately condemn forced invasive (anal) examinations as a form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.
3. Request official data from the Government on Article 120 cases for the end of 2025 and for 2026.
4. Request data on the number of forensic medical examinations ordered in Article 120 cases.
5. Support safe complaint and protection mechanisms for victims.
6. Support urgent legal, psychological, and relocation assistance.

14. Final Conclusion

1. Official data on Article 120 show a sharp increase in criminal law pressure: after 17 cases per year in 2021–2023, the number of cases rose to 48 in 2024 and to 71 cases in the first nine months of 2025 alone. This trend cannot be viewed in isolation from reports of raids, mass detentions, forced access to phones, threats, and forced invasive examinations.
2. Article 120 is not only a discriminatory criminal provision. It creates an infrastructure of fear in which LGBTIQ+ people cannot safely seek protection, report violence, challenge torture, protect their personal data, or access medical and social services without the risk of criminal prosecution.

3. It is particularly alarming that forced invasive anal examinations have become part of a recurring mechanism of persecution. They are carried out in conditions of detention, threats, and absence of access to a lawyer; they have no reliable evidentiary value; and they violate dignity, bodily integrity, and the prohibition of torture.
4. The main systemic problem lies in the impossibility of effective challenge. A person who has undergone such an examination cannot safely complain, because the complaint itself may lead to criminal prosecution, exposure of private life, threats against family members, leakage of personal data, and further pressure. Therefore, the absence of official complaints must not be interpreted as the absence of torture. On the contrary, it points to fear, distrust of state mechanisms, and the absence of effective protection.
5. Article 120 must be framed as an issue of non-compliance with Uzbekistan's international legal obligations. Forced invasive anal examinations must be immediately prohibited and condemned. All cases of their use must be investigated, the results of such examinations must be excluded from evidence, and victims must receive protection, rehabilitation, and access to justice without the risk of criminal prosecution.