

Dying for Love: Homosexuality in the Middle East

By Heather Simmons

*"In Iran, we don't have homosexuals, like in your country."
-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*

Introduction

Today in the United States, the most frequent references to the Middle East are concerned with the War on Terrorism. However, there is another, hidden battle being waged: the war for human rights on the basis of sexuality. Homosexuality is a crime in many of the Middle Eastern states and is punishable by death in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iran (Ungar 2002). Chronic abuses and horrific incidences such as the 2009 systematic murders of hundreds of "gay" men in Iraq are seldom reported in the international media. Speculation as to why this population is hidden includes the controversial nature of homosexuality, religious extremism, regional differences in accepted sexual practices, and even international politics. Whatever the reason, the sexuality war raging in the Middle East needs to become a focus of the international community—lives are at stake.

Differences in Language

Within the Middle East, notions of "gay" or "homosexual" are different from those of the West. Simply being effeminate or resisting cultural norms can cause one to be labeled as "gay." The categorization of someone as "homosexual" frequently does not refer to a physical act with someone of the same gender. Within Middle Eastern culture, there are different classifications of "gay," including homoerotics, homosexuals, and other words that do not have English translations. In some cases, there are different words for the "passive" versus the "active" partner; and only the passive partner is considered homosexual.

Inherent within the discourse regarding sexuality in the Middle East is the lack of distinction between "sex" and "gender." In some instances, homosexuals are referred to as the "third" sex—neither male nor female. They are accused of being subversive and violating societal norms by not fitting prescribed gender roles. Problems accepting same-sex relationships or attraction negate recorded history where homosexuality was an established component of Middle Eastern culture. This revision of history denies reports of cloistered women who maintained their virginity through relationships with women and sexual relationships between older men and teenage boys as part of a "coming of age" process.

Several authors postulate that the terms "gay" and "homosexual" did not enter Middle Eastern thought until after the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This argument has political ramifications, creating speculation that homosexuality is a Western invention and that member states of the West are attempting to destroy Middle Eastern culture through undermining religious beliefs and introducing non-heterosexual behaviors. The following historical overview provides insights into both the backlash against the West and the abuse of homosexuals in the Middle East today.

Islam and Religious Extremism

It is difficult to conduct an analysis of homosexuality in the Middle East without an in-depth investigation of its relationship with Islam. In addition to religious practice, the tenets of Islam are found within everyday culture, codified law, and individual psychosocial realities of residents in the Middle East. It is so pervasive that cultural Islam is frequently distinguished from religious Islam through the designation of the term “Islamicate.” Islam is interpreted differently by different followers, but generally its teachings regarding sexuality (homosexual or heterosexual) can be reduced to the importance of procreation and formalized frameworks for sexual activity.

Increasingly, Islam is used as justification for the arrest, detention, and murder of homosexuals throughout the Middle East. “Homosexual” can be roughly translated in Arabic as “the people of Lot”, which is the basis of many anti-homosexual interpretations of the *Qur’an*. However, many scholars assert that the *Qur’an* does not contain passages that explicitly forbid or denounce homosexuality. Instead, they argue, it has become a cultural norm to interpret the *Qur’an* as being anti-homosexual. The use of Islam as a basis for cultural norms has led to many arrests on charges such as “contempt of religion” for those perceived to be different (Pratt, 2007).

Islam has influenced culture through the application of Islamic *Shari’a* law, though the law punishes those who outwardly display homosexual affection more than it punishes the practice or existence of homosexuality. Further criticisms of homosexuality are found in *Hadith*, history or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad that were passed down orally through history until they were recorded in writing. Many *Hadith* reports contradict each other, but they include severe condemnations of homosexuality. *Hadith* is cited as the basis for killing those classified as “homosexual.” Those perceived to be “gay” or who do not fit gender norms are frequently charged with “contempt of religion.” Many argue for continued self-assessment and personal interpretation of the *Qur’an*, *Hadith*, and Islamicate practices.

Regional Differences

Countries within the Middle East tend to differ in their treatment of homosexuals and homosexuality. Israel is often seen as the anomaly— accepting homosexuality and even allowing “Pride Parades” to occur throughout the country. The removal of legal impediments to equality and human rights has had great implications for the homosexual community within Israel. However, Israel does not accept those petitioning for asylum on the basis of sexuality and little is written about transgendered and intersex persons within Israel.

Other countries such as Egypt do not have laws forbidding homosexuality. However, the 2001 incident where sixty men were arrested and detained on the Queen Boat for “debauchery” is an example of how homosexuals are targeted via legal state means. The men arrested were tortured, stripped, and forced to report whether they were “active” or “passive” partners. Since this incident, many others have been convicted of “habitual debauchery”. Other countries that do not have laws against homosexuality utilize sodomy laws to arrest, imprison, and kill male homosexuals. In many countries, female homosexuality is not as great an issue, due to a “lack of penetration.”

Still other countries within the Middle East expressly criminalize homosexuality and homosexual acts. They hunt suspected “homosexuals” and enforce laws through disappearances, kidnappings, and murders. Numerous reports of neighbors disappearing, friends arrested in the streets, or accusations of homosexuality creating the need for residents to flee abound. In these countries, families excommunicate loved ones who are only accused of homosexuality. Accusations alone are a source of deep shame. Evidence of homosexual acts and clearly stated judicial processes are not required for murder in these countries.

Politics

In countries where being “gay” is punishable by death, notions of homosexuality can be politicized for the advantage of those in power. People can be accused as homosexuals and executed without evidence or trial. Additionally, the controversial nature of homosexuality allows it to be used by politicians as a diversion from subjects of importance, as well as a tool to protect themselves from being accused of political corruption. This controversy can incite religious extremism, political rebellion, war and murder, and subversions of human rights.

Many residents of the Middle East have been reported to claim homosexuality is a Western “problem.” They assert that sexuality has become rhetoric, demonstrating the differences between Eastern and Western cultures. In this regard, several authors postulate that homophobia and violence against homosexual and transgender persons are actually expressions of anti-colonialism and rebellion against the proliferation of Western culture and ideals. Others suggest that the emergence of violence against homosexuals is an expression of religious extremism- humans fighting for their beliefs through the abuse of others.

Conclusion

While homosexuality is contentious in many countries—including the United States—in the Middle East it is the excuse for the arbitrary detention, arrest, torture, and deaths of hundreds of people. Whether because of politics, religion, or common cultural practices, homosexuals within the Middle East continue to fight for their lives and their right to love. Only with the cessation of these practices and the advocacy of human rights for all people will human beings truly achieve peace.

Annotations

Afary, Janet. 2009. Sexual Politics in Modern Iran. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Annotation: The author is a professor of History and Women's Studies at Purdue University, and a native of Iran. Her research has focused on gender in the Middle East and in this article she reviews 500 years of social change in Iran, focusing particularly on issues surrounding sexual politics within the last 200 years. The author moves from the historical background of Iranian

society to what she calls the current "unfinished sexual revolution," including a review of current discourses regarding women's rights, sexuality, and modernity. This text received critical acclaim for its insight and comprehensiveness. Previous works by this author have received numerous awards.

Ali, K. 2006. Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Annotation: This project is a compilation of Ali's participation and experiences in the Feminist Sexual Ethics Project of 2003, the Harvard's Women's Studies in Religion Program in 2003-2004, and at Brandeis University. Ali examines whether or not a practice can be perceived as "Islamic" and the relationship of Islam with customary practices. She advocates for ongoing examination and assessment of customary practices, as well as the need for adaptability within customs and religions. At times Ali accuses some modern Muslims of simply following Islamic orders rather than critically judging practices for themselves. The author explores the relationship between gender, sexuality, Islam, and sex, analyzing current debates and offering opinions on these discussions. Extensive notes, bibliography, and index sections are offered at the conclusion of the text.

Amer, Sahar. 2009. "Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18(2): 215-36.

Annotation: This article is a study of Arabic lesbian and lesbian-like women as chronicled in historic literary writings. Amer traces the history of lesbianism to an intercultural, interfaith love affair between an Arab woman and a Christian woman in pre-Islamic Iraq. The author reports positive perceptions of lesbianism and homosexuality in medieval Arabic literary writings - asserting that mystics and men in positions of power also had homosexual partners. Additionally, Amer highlights the Qur'an's condemnation of adultery over homosexuality, though notes that today the condemnation has reversed. In researching material for this article, the author documents her struggles to secure such texts- even in their English versions - largely due to the penalties associated with homosexuality in many Middle Eastern states and her status as a woman. While this article contains a good overview of homosexuality as recorded in historical works, Amer does not provide a bridge to current practices and the evolution of violent ramifications for homosexual practices. However, she provides an alternative argument to that of Middle Eastern homosexuality as a result of Western colonialism, providing an opportunity for an increasingly accepting view of sexuality.

Babayan, Kathryn, and Afsaneh Najmabadi. 2008. "Islamicate Sexualities: Translations across Temporal Geographies of Desire," in Steven Caton, Cemal Kafadar, Susan M. Kahn, Roy Mottahedeh and Roger Owen (eds.), Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Annotation: This collection of essays emerged from a seminar entitled "Crossing Paths of Middle Eastern and Sexuality Studies: Challenges of Theory, History, and Comparative Methods," sponsored by the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study in May 2003. This text confronts the differences between Eastern views of sexuality and Euro-American perceptions. Additionally, it investigates issues of sexuality and gender across geography and time, as well as the differences in nomenclature and cultural connotations inherent within vocabulary and word choice between Eastern and Western cultures.

CQ Transcripts Wire. 2007. "President Ahmadinejad Delivers Remarks at Columbia University." *The Washington Post*. Available online: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/24/AR2007092401042.html>.

Annotation: This article is a transcript of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's remarks at Columbia University in September 2007. Following his address, President Ahmadinejad answered questions from the crowd. In response to a question regarding the executions of homosexuals in Iran, the President claimed that there are no homosexuals in Iran. Additionally, he began to talk about capital punishment for those that "cause the deterioration of the lives of hundreds of millions of youth around the world," though he blended this with a discussion of illicit drug traffickers. It is unclear whether the President was confused by the question, if he views homosexuals and drug traffickers in the same category of criminal, or if he was simply attempting to dodge the question. However, this speech provides insight into the mindset and motivations of Iranian leadership.

Daniel, Tallie Ben. 2007. "Ani Geh Bisrael: Zionism and the Paradox of Gay Rights." UC Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Women. Available online: <http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/43s5k7nf>.

Annotation: In this article, the author reviews Israel's pro-gay laws and policies, asserting that Israel is an anomaly in the Middle East, where many countries still impose the death penalty for LGBT persons. However, the author is overall critical of Israel's acceptance of homosexuals. He describes the reported oppression of homosexuals by the Palestinian Authority and suggests that these reports are rhetoric used to validate Israel's invasion and occupation of Palestine. He supports this suggestion by reporting that Israel is no longer accepting asylum-seekers on the basis of sexuality due to "security reasons." Additionally, religious overtones are inherent within the text, implying that Muslims should be converted to Judaism because of their oppression of women and homosexuals. The article does not have an attached bibliography and the references found within the paper are not fully cited.

Fellmeth, Aaron Xavier. 2008. "State Regulation of Sexuality in International Human Rights Law and Theory." *William and Mary Law Review* 50: 797-936.

Annotation: The author of this article is a Professor of International Law and a peer reviewer for the *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*. This article is divided into two sections. In part I Fellmeth provides an overview of various international laws and reviews the application of human rights norms to issues of sexuality worldwide. In part II he examines the justifications for accepting or denying equal rights for sexual minorities throughout the world. Fellmeth also explores the influence of international human rights law and norms on state practice regarding the application of human rights to sexual minorities. Within this exploration, Fellmeth examines the continuing disparity in human rights law application for sexual minorities and their relationship to religious traditions and ideals. Non-Western cultural and ideological validations for discrimination are not thoroughly explored within this article.

Fridman, Ari, and Maxine Kaye. 2007. "Human Rights in Iran." New York: American Jewish Committee.

Annotation: This report was published by the American Jewish Committee, a group that, among other things, protects rights of Jews throughout the world, promotes human rights for all, works for the security of Israel, and advocates for increased understanding between the U.S. and Israel. It is important to note the connection of the sponsoring organization to the state of Israel - whose primary enemy is Iran - as this could indicate potential bias within this report on Iran. The report focuses on human rights abuses and issues related to women, religious and ethnic minorities, freedom of the press, children, homosexuality, torture, and due process within the state of Iran. The author provides an overview of human rights abuses within Iran, but does not delve into the abuses with any depth.

Habib, Samar. 2007. Female Homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and Representations, Research in Gender and Society. New York: Routledge.

Annotation: This text is unique in that it specifically focuses on female homosexuality in the Middle East. The author draws from "neglected primary sources" and utilizes historical research, literary analysis, comparative and cultural study, theological research, and analysis of contemporary medical literature to explore Middle Eastern lesbianism. The author asserts that female homosexuality in the Middle East is not a new phenomenon and that religious orthodoxy should not be opposed to tolerance of sexual conduct. Additionally, she repeatedly criticizes Western writers for their portrayal and assertions regarding homosexuality, offering a comparison for Eastern conceptualizations of lesbianism.

Habib, Samar (ed.). 2010. Islam and Homosexuality. 2 vols. Vol. 1. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Annotation: In this text, the authors examine the relationship between LGBTIQ persons and Islam. The authors include an investigation of homosexuality in Muslim cultures, the illegality of same-sex intercourse in multiple Middle Eastern countries, the roots of homophobia in Islamic theology and teachings, and the evidence of a burgeoning LGBTIQ movement within the Muslim world. The essays are written by twenty experts within the field and are connected

through an exploration of Islamic theology and homophobia. This volume of *Islam and Homosexuality* - Volume 1 - depicts specific experiences of LGBTIQ Muslims today, while Volume 2 includes examinations of these issues from a global perspective. The editor, Samar Habib, has written numerous other books and articles on the subjects of homosexuality, human rights, and the Middle East.

Ilkkaracan, Pinar. 2008. "Introduction: Sexuality as a Contested Political Domain in the Middle East," in Pinar Ilkkaracan (ed.), Deconstructing Sexuality in the Middle East: Challenges and Discourses,1-16. Burlington: Ashgate.

Annotation: This collection of essays is authored by clinicians, activists, and researchers. The essays are disparate, with the primary theme being simply sexuality and gender rights within the Middle East. The primary essay involving homosexuality is written by the editor, Pinar Ilkkaracan, and focuses on the politicization of sexuality and gender equality. She describes the religious right's polarization between Islamic and Western sexualities as further vilification of non-heterosexual identities. The editor is the Founding President of Women for Women's Human Rights - NEW WAYS, a Turkish women's advocacy NGO, and co-founder of The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies, an international network of NGO's working towards promoting sexual and bodily rights in the Middle East/North Africa and South/Southeast Asia. Additionally, she is a researcher, activist, trainer, psychotherapist, Turkish delegate to the UN, and a member of the Global Fund for Women's Advisory Council, the International Advisory Committee of BRIDGE at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and the Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics.

Jong, Anisa de, and Suhraiya Jivraj. 2004. "Muslim Moral Instruction on Homosexuality." in *(Homo)Sexualities and Youth: An Encyclopedia* Safra Project Publications. Available online: www.safraproject.org.

Annotation: In this article, the authors review the dissonance Muslim homosexual youth feel in the Middle East. They argue that Muslims interpret and experience Islam differently, and therefore have differing opinions regarding Muslim law, Muslim opinions on homosexuality, and more. The authors deconstruct verses of the Qur'an that are frequently used against homosexuality and postulate the idea that a progressive Muslim framework could be used to review these verses and come to a more accepting view of homosexuality. They further argue for increased acknowledgement of prejudice from both Muslims and non-Muslim LGBT youth, to increase acceptance and collaboration between the two groups. While focusing on youth within Muslim communities, the arguments made by the authors can be more broadly applied to non-Muslims and those fighting for LGBT rights in Muslim countries.

Khalaf, Samir, and John Gagnon (eds.). Sexuality in the Arab World. London: Saqi Books.

Annotation: This text is based on a conference held at the American University of Beirut in 2003. The authors examine processes for enhancing and protecting one's social worth, autonomy, and sense of well-being, especially as sexuality is becoming more central to the definition of self. The authors review multiple intersections between sexuality and society, demonstrating the results of these intersections and the influences they have upon each other. Most of the contributors included within this work focus their research on Beirut. Each author covers a separate dimension of the intersection between sexuality and society, from the sexual relationships of live-in servants to LGBT issues.

Khoshnood, K., F. Hashemian, N. Moshtagh, M. Eftekahrt, and S. Setayesh. 2008. "Social Stigma, Homosexuality and Transsexuality in Iran." *European Journal of Sexology* 17(Supplement 1): S69.

Annotation: This article describes the recent phenomenon of sex changes in Iran, where hundreds of people are legally having their sex changed, and where gay male sex carries the death penalty. The authors are in the process of conducting a study of seventy homosexuals requesting sex change operations. They examine the main sources and characteristics of social stigma for this population, the difference in stigmatization between homosexuals and transsexuals, and the associations between stigma, mental health, and HIV behaviors. Preliminary results of this study indicate "a significant level of homophobia and insitutionalized discrimination against LGBT populations in Iran." While limited both in applicability and depth, this study provides an overview of the discrimination experienced by Iranian LGBT persons. Further results of the study have yet to be published.

Kugle, Scott Siraj al-Haqq. 2010. Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Muslims. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Annotation: Although Kugle previously taught at Duke University, the University of Cape Town, and Swathmore College, he is now an independent researcher focusing on Islamic studies. Many claim that he is the first Muslim to publish widely on the issue of homosexuality and Islam, especially from a theological perspective. The author reports that many Islamic authorities claim that homosexuality is forbidden in Islam, but Kugle challenges this through his claims that the Qur'an does not contain verses that condemn homosexuals. Instead, the author suggests that some verses allude to toleration of homosexuality within Muslim communities. Kugle has received criticism regarding his assertion that reports from the Hadith that condemn homosexual and transgender persons might be fake. The author examines scripture, law, and tradition to examine the foundations for prevailing attitudes towards homosexuality in Islam. Kugle argues for an "Islamic Humanism" that embraces diversity and advocates the importance of consistent evolution of religious and legal practices to best encapsulate the changing complexities of human life. The author concludes by offering an index, footnotes, bibliography, and glossary of Arabic words used in the text.

Long, Scott. 2009. ""They Want Us Exterminated;" Murder, Torture, Sexual Orientation and Gender in Iraq." New York: Human Rights Watch.

Annotation: This report is based on research conducted by Long and Rasha Mounneh, a researcher in the Middle East/North Africa division at Human Rights Watch. It includes interviews with 54 Iraqi men who consider themselves to be "gay," as well as interviews with Iraqi human rights activists, journalists, and medical doctors. The report describes a "campaign of systematic killings" that occurred in the early months of 2009 and targeted men perceived to be gay in Iraq. The author explains how "gay" is conceptualized in Iraq- much differently than in the West and how the spread of Western ideas through increased globalization is creating dissonance in the Middle East. The author also describes these murders as a result of moral fears and social anxieties about "traditional" values and cultural change. The report contains limited information regarding lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered persons. However, it explicates both international and domestic laws regarding the systematic killing of homosexual men in Iraq, and offers pages of recommendations for ending the violence.

Mahdavi, Pardis. 2009. Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Annotation: The author, Mahdavi, uses this book to examine the sexual and social revolution occurring in post-revolution (1979) Iran. Through this analysis, the author, a sociologist, reviews other sociopolitical issues that Iranian youth are fighting to change within their country. Mahdavi writes from a personal perspective, offering personal experiences, observations, interviews, and interactions as evidence of the changing environment within Iran. Mahdavi asserts that parents are a driving force in the changes being fought for within Iranian society and concludes that this changing perspective in older Iranians can be viewed as evidence of successful reform campaigns promulgated by Iranian youth.

Massad, Joseph A. 2007. Desiring Arabs. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Annotation: The Jordanian and Palestinian Arab author of this book is an Associate Professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History at Columbia University. In this text, the author reviews Arab sexual attitudes and the changes in these attitudes over time by examining Arabic texts dating from the 19th century to the present. Additionally, the author asserts that the West is imperially imposing a gay rights agenda on the Middle East, therefore creating homosexuality. While useful as a detailed work regarding sexual attitudes in the Middle East, controversial details regarding the author's views towards homosexuality and the Middle East shed light on potential biases, creating questions as to the validity of this text. This text is his third, and it has received critical academic praise for its contributions both to the analysis of Arab culture and to the theory of sexuality. However, it has also garnered criticism for its relativism and unfounded accusations.

Maticka-Tyndale, Eleanor, and Lisa Smylie. 2008. "Sexual Rights: Striking a Balance."
International Journal of Sexual Health 20(1-2): 7-24.

Annotation: The primary author is a Professor of Sociology and holds the position of Canada Research Chair in Social Justice and Sexual Health. This examination of sexual rights has influenced national and regional sexual health policies, as well as the implementation of various sexual health-enhancing programs. In this article, the author asserts that sexual rights are a human right and she addresses religious and cultural concerns regarding sexual rights. She stresses that sexual rights are health rights, though in this article her justifications for this classification are not apparent. The author further emphasizes why sexual rights are needed, including connecting sexual rights to the Millennium Development Goals and offering suggestions for achievement of sexual rights. While the author offers only cursory examinations of issues surrounding sexual rights, the overview provides a good basis for further exploration and action.

Najmabadi, Afsaneh. 2005. Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards. Berkley: University of California Press.

Annotation: Throughout this text, Najmabadi examines the role of women and sexuality from 19th century Iran to the present; postulating reasons for the changing views of sexuality and gender over time. The author uses gender as a construct for analyzing history and considers the ways in which gender and sexuality have been central in shaping Iranian modernity. Through this perspective, Najmabadi views changing conceptions of beauty, homeland, nation, knowledge, education, love, marriage, and citizenship. Additionally, the author considers the influence of globalization and European disapproval of traditional conceptualizations and how they have shaped current Iranian society. An extensive bibliography and endnotes are available at the end of the text for further research.

Patane, Vincenzo. 2006. "Homosexuality in the Middle East and North Africa," in Robert Aldrich (ed.), Gay Life and Culture: A World History, 271-301. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2006.

Annotation: Within this chapter, Patane explores issues related to Islam, Orientalism, Western views of the East, sex tourism, immigration, and regional-specific issues. He asserts that homosexual practice between adults and teens (primarily males) is a cultural expression of "passing on" traditions, and generally is not seen as homosexuality. Additionally, the author describes how in some Islamic societies, only the "passive partner" is viewed as homosexual, with the "active partner" being tolerated and in some cases accepted - particularly if married. Patane blames the current return to fundamentalism as the reason for censorship and the deaths of homosexuals within countries in the Middle East and North Africa. While offering good breadth, the author does not offer critical evaluative depth in the examination of both current and historical homosexual practices within these countries. Additionally, the text is somewhat graphic in pictures and text, and may not be suitable for younger readers.

Pratt, Nicola. 2007. "The Queen Boat Case in Egypt: Sexuality, National Security and State Sovereignty." *Review of International Studies* 33: 128-44.

Annotation: This author has focused her research and numerous publications upon feminist issues within the Middle East. Published in 2007, earlier forms of this article were presented at the School of Political, Social and International Studies, UEA, in November 2004, and to participants in the "Hegemonic Masculinities in International Politics" conference at the University of Manchester, in May 2005. The author utilizes the Queen Boat incident to illustrate the persecution of homosexuals – in particular, homosexual men – by Egyptian officials in 2001. She employs feminist international relations theory to examine how this focus on sexuality by the Egyptian government is indicative of larger issues within Egypt's international politics and security. While the use of gender and sexual identity as interchangeable terms is both inaccurate and ineffectual, the connections between culture, human behavior, and international politics as depicted within this article are innovative and inspire further investigation.

Siker, Jeffrey S. (ed.). 2007. Homosexuality and Religion: An Encyclopedia. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Annotation: This book is divided into three sections: the first contains essays on homosexuality, its intersection with religion, and their reciprocal relationships with law, social and biological sciences, and spirituality; the second is the encyclopedia, providing information on a variety of topics from HIV/AIDS to various religious traditions; and the third is a bibliography comprised of further readings, websites, and contributors. The editor, Dr. Siker, is the Chair of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University and an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. The text offers a wide variety of information, completely supported by multiple sources, covered topically in language that is clear and concise.

Simon, Rita J., and Alison Brooks. 2009. Gay and Lesbian Communities the World Over. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Annotation: This book is divided into two parts: part one is focused on legal, religious, and historical analyses of homosexuality; part two focuses on select country-specific reports on gays and lesbians. The book concludes with a chapter on Gay and Lesbian adoption and with an appendix analyzing the treatment of homosexuals under the Nazi regime and in the Soviet Union. Each chapter provides a topical overview of the issues related to homosexuality within the context of the country or issue being analyzed within the chapter, followed by a short bibliography. While this book provides an adequate overview for those seeking to gain topical knowledge of gay and lesbian communities throughout the world.

The Safra Project. 2004. "Country Information Report: Iran," London: Safra Project Publications.

Annotation: The Safra Project is a London-based resource project for LGBTQ Muslim women. This report provides information on legal provisions for homosexuality, public attitudes and social issues, prosecutions and punishments, and gender diversity within Iran. It also examines homosexuality and gender diversity within Shari'a Muslim law, which is applicable in Iran. Homosexuality is illegal under Shari'a law—and therefore in Iran—and the report provides an explication of various laws, religious ideals, and public views that support the condemnation of homosexuality.

Ungar, Mark. 2002. "State Violence and Lgbt Rights," in Kenton Worcester, Sally Avery Bermanzohn and Mark Ungar, (eds.), Violence and Politics: Globalization's Paradox, , 48-66. New York: Routledge.

Annotation: This text is a compilation of essays that provide a broad overview of internal violence within globalized society. In the introduction, the editors specify six themes that are found throughout the essays. While each of these themes pertain to violence, they are unrelated and offer few insights into the various themes of each essay. The particular chapter utilized for this paper focuses on three principle types of state violence and how they relate to members of the LGBTIQ community: "legal" violence, "semilegal" police violence, and extrajudicial violence. The author examines their relationship to the political environments in which they are manifest, including specific country examples. He provides an overview of violence and homosexuality, without delving into deeper, theoretical issues or tangible evidence. Furthermore, the connection between LGBTIQ violence and globalization is difficult to discern within this chapter, as the author primarily focuses on internal violence, making broader generalization and application of the chapter difficult.

Wing, Adrienne Katherine. 2008. "Twenty-First-Century *Loving*: Nationality, Gender, and Religion in the Muslim World." *Fordham Law Review* 76: 2895-905.

Annotation: This essay was inspired by the author's participation in the Fordham Law Review's Symposium, "Forty Years of Loving: Confronting Issues of Race, Sexuality, and the Family in the Twenty-first Century." The author uses this article to reflect on the Supreme Court's decision in the *Loving v. Virginia* case - where interracial marriage was legalized - and the ongoing battles between race, sexuality, and religion. Wing focuses on Islamic laws regarding issues of sexuality, women's rights, and the legality of marriage, and offers a cursory examination of homosexuality. The author reviews international human rights laws and compares them with Muslim laws regarding marriage rules and women's rights. The article provides a good review of Muslim laws, without focusing specifically on homosexuality. The potential for Western bias should be considered.

Yip, Andrew Kam-Tuck. 2009. "Islam and Sexuality: Orthodoxy and Contestations." *Contemporary Islam* 3: 1-5.

Annotation: In this article, the author asserts that issues of sexuality and sex (usually thought of as micro-level concerns) have significant implications for macro-level policy due to their connectiveness to rights as human beings. This paper is the introduction to a journal that presents the views of Muslims regarding sexuality within various societies. One issue Yip highlights is that of the relationship between the individual and the institutional/social practices of Islam. He provides an overview and summary of Islamic thought through sexuality studies conducted within British, Australian, and Scottish societies. Yip offers suggestions for further research regarding non-heterosexual Muslims, including a study that considers transgender and bisexual issues as separate constructs than homosexuality.