

Table of Contents

- ***Israeli government considering ban on LGBTQ 'conversion therapy,' but bill put on hold***
- ***Court rules against Beersheba print shop that refused to serve LGBT group***

Israeli government considering ban on LGBTQ 'conversion therapy,' but bill put on hold

Coalition sources say the fact the bill to ban the widely discredited, harmful practice is even being considered is an achievement, but members of the opposition argue it wasn't immediately disqualified only to minimize potential backlash against two openly gay ministers.

By Jonathan Lis

Haaretz (21.06.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2BvjU2k> - The Israeli government will examine legislation that would prohibit so-called conversion therapy, which aims to change the sexual orientation of LGBTQ people, but is widely discredited by experts worldwide and is used despite no scientific evidence that sexual orientation can be altered.

The Ministerial Committee for Legislation will likely delay the bill proposal brought forward by Meretz Chairman Nitzan Horowitz in order to consider a more "moderate" version of the law that would be accepted by ultra-Orthodox parties, according to a government source.

The proposed legislation would ban "conversion therapy" and sanction so-called therapists with jail time, a fine, and revocation of their professional license.

The government source said that the fact the bill is being considered even though the coalition is made up in part by ultra-Orthodox parties, who oppose pro-LGBTQ legislation, is seen as an achievement.

Sources in the opposition, however, said the law was not immediately disqualified not in order to pass it at a later date, but to minimize offense to two openly gay ministers serving on the committee for legislation, and avoid criticism from Benny Gantz's Kahol Lavan party, which promised it would advocate for the LGBTQ community in its election campaign.

Previous attempts at writing into law a ban on "conversion therapy" have failed, including for bills proposed for former Health Minister Yael German, which never passed even a preliminary Knesset vote.

"'Conversion therapy' is murder," Horowitz said at the meeting of the legislative committee. "It's murder of the soul and often times the body too. These procedures result in self-harm to the point of suicide. What therapy means here is mental and physical abuse of teenagers."

Horowitz said that professionals don't believe the procedure can convert a person's sexual orientation, and that it results in great harm. "The purpose of this law is to save lives," he added.

"It's our duty to locate the businesses of abuse, to revoke their licenses and charge them with a crime. Just as we would with a murderer or any person who causes the death of another person."

Horowitz appealed to "all who see themselves as part of the fight against homophobia." He named members of Kahol Lavan – including Benny Gantz, Justice Minister Avi Nissenkorn, and Tourism Minister Asaf Zamir – as well as Likud MK Amir Ohana, who is gay, in his appeal.

"It's our legal and moral duty to save the next victims of 'conversion therapy.' It's an opportunity for the Knesset to give a clear message – it doesn't matter if you're straight, gay, lesbian, or trans, we don't want to change you. You are beautiful and whole just as you are."

Court rules against Beersheba print shop that refused to serve LGBT group

Judge says that when one's religious beliefs conflict with a necessity to provide service to all, the latter value holds superior; minister slams decision.

By Jacob Magid

The Times of Israel (21.04.2020) - <https://bit.ly/2VKwX7X> - The Beersheba Magistrate's Court ruled Tuesday that a local print shop must compensate an LGBT rights group after it refused to print its posters.

The Aguda Association for LGBT Equality in Israel filed a NIS 100,000 (\$28,134) lawsuit against the business, Rainbow Color, three years ago after its owners refused service to the Ben Gurion University LGBT chapter.

"We do not deal with abomination materials. We are Jews!" the shop had said in response to the chapter's request for an estimate on the posters.

Aguda argued that Rainbow Color had violated the Prohibition of Discrimination in Products, Services and Entry into Places of Entertainment and Public Places Law Act passed by the Knesset in 2000.

Rainbow Color claimed that its owners, who are religious, are barred from providing assistance to offenders of religious law. In its defense, the owners added the rulings of two Orthodox rabbis who wrote that according to Jewish law the publication of such posters is prohibited.

Judge Orit Lipshitz rejected the defendant's claim and ordered that it pay NIS 50,000 (\$14,071), in addition to legal expenses.

"The court does not seek to enter into the consciousness of service providers... when it comes to their subjective opinions with regard to others," Lipshitz wrote. "The legislature also does not seek to interfere with the freedom of religion and worship reserved for them as human beings."

"When their beliefs conflict with a necessity of providing service to all in a public space, the last value holds superior," she concluded.

Lauding the ruling, Aguda CEO Ohad Hizki said in a statement that, "it is unacceptable for a business that provides a public service to decide to discriminate against an entire population of Israeli society simply because of its sexual orientation or gender identity."

"To this day, thousands of companies and community members suffer discrimination, hatred and violence just because of who they are. We applaud this clear and just ruling that prohibits unfair discrimination and [will] continue to fight for anyone and everyone to receive full equality of rights," he added.

Menashe Yado, of the right-wing Honenu legal aid organization representing Rainbow Color, called the ruling a form of "secular coercion."

"If in the State of Israel a religious Jew cannot run a business according to his lifestyle, [then] where can he? Every religious Jew knows that the people of Israel have managed to survive thousands of years [sic] thanks to the Torah teachings of Israel. The court has forgotten this or perhaps never learned this lesson," Yado said in a statement.

Transportation Minister Bezalel Smotrich called the ruling "outrageous" and "secular coercion."

"[The court] is forcing a religious and mitzvah-keeping man to act against his belief at his private business," he said.

Smotrich has called himself a "proud homophobe" and was involved in organizing an anti-gay "Beast Parade" in Jerusalem in response to the capital's annual Gay Pride parade.
