

## Gay Men Keep Being Refused Asylum For Not “Acting Gay” Enough

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14 SEP 2018

Over the last month there have been a few notable cases of asylum seekers in Austria. In each of the cases, the men in question, who are from Muslim countries, claim to be gay, but are rejected for not acting gay enough.

The first two cases were reported on August 15th. The first involved an Afghan teenager who was rejected when an immigration official told him that he didn't “walk, act, or dress” like a gay man, according to [The Guardian](#). The teen also got into fights with other men in his accommodation, and his aggression, according to the official, was not something that would be expected out of a gay man.

Other factors that the official led with were the fact that he didn't have many friends — “Aren't homosexuals rather social?” — and that he wouldn't be able to recognize his own sexuality at a young age, like he had claimed. The teen said he realized his sexuality at the age of 12, but the report from the Austrian official said this was unlikely because it was too young and because the society in Afghanistan isn't sexually stimulating.

The analysis of this teenager's personality given by the Austrian immigration official is based on a combination of pretty specific personality stereotypes and just misinformation. Obviously not all gay men are social, and even if they were, I'm not sure the attitudes of someone trying to gain asylum are completely representative of their personality. Also, you don't need to know many gay people to know that it's very possible to discover your sexuality at 12, or even earlier.

The second case involved an Iranian man, Navid Jafartash, 28, who

homosexuality — an interview for which he could have faced the death penalty in Iran.”

To put it simply: This is absurd. Let’s put aside the ethnocentrism that comes into play when assuming that all gay men around the world would know anything about the rainbow flag that originated in Kansas. Even in the United States, you’d probably be hard-pressed to find an LGBT person who even knows that each color stands for something, let alone has the knowledge to name them.

On August 27th, a 27-year-old Iraqi man called Firas had [his application rejected](#) after a six-hour interview in which officials deemed he was acting too stereotypical to be a real gay man. According to *The Independent*, he was subsequently outed to his father and brother during questioning — even after assurance that the information from the interview would remain confidential.

Not only does Firas’ story show the Austrian government using pretty irresponsible and violent action towards his wellbeing, but it shows some inconsistencies. We have three separate cases of gay men who are disqualified for multiple reasons — not gay enough, too stereotypically gay and not familiar enough with western gay symbols.

All three of these cases pose the problem of what it means to be gay and how identifying as gay sets expectations of gender expression, interests and personality in general. Plenty of gay men, especially those who grew up with the need to suppress their sexuality, can act as masculine as straight men. And on the other hand, plenty of gay men act in ways that might be considered stereotypical. This isn’t news to anyone in 2018.

However, there might be something darker going on. Rather than the Austrian officials not believing these gay men, they could very well be using the flexibility of LGBT identity in order to deny them asylum for xenophobic or political reasons. If you want to deny someone access to your country, what better way than by insisting that they’re lying about an immaterial part of their identity?

The Austrian government has taken some steps towards more nationalist-driven, restrictive immigration policy. There have been talks of [cutting benefits](#) for immigrants, including refugees, who do not speak German. They also recently [cut the opportunity](#) for asylum seekers to take labor training apprenticeships, effectively making it more difficult for them to find work in the country.

It seems possible that Austrian immigration officials are setting impossible standards for what being gay is in order to effectively deny asylum to gay men who genuinely fear for their safety. And in the process, they’re recklessly endangering multiple gay people who could be criminally punished in their home country for their sexuality. Setting your own rules for sexuality and behavior is one



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