



Witness Statement of Farshid

Name: Farshid (pseudonym)
Place of Birth: Tehran, Iran
Year of Birth: 1986
Occupation: Student

Interviewing Organization: Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (IHRDC)

Date of Interview: 15 September 2012

Interviewer: IHRDC Staff

This statement was prepared pursuant to an interview with Farshid [note: a pseudonym has been given to the witness to protect his identity]. It was approved by Farshid on May 3, 2013. There are 43 paragraphs in the statement.

The views and opinions of the witness expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center.

Introduction

1. My name is Farshid. I was born in Tehran in 1986. I lived in Iran until 2010. I am a homosexual man.
2. I left Iran at the age of 24 and sought asylum in Turkey. I have been living in Canada for about seven months. I studied electronic engineering at Islamshahr Islamic Azad University before I was expelled. I worked as a hairdresser while I was in school, and also for a short while after I was expelled.

Rape

3. I was raped once. I was with a number of my gay friends in Vali-e Asr Avenue. It was around 12:00 or 12:30 am. I think it was in fall 2007. It was cool [outside] and I was wearing a sweater and a scarf. We parked the car and took a walk to get ice cream. Two plainclothes *basijis* approached us. They were bearded. They showed us their identification cards. I think one of them was named Mohammadi or Mohammadian. I grew up in a family that taught me that I should not accept anything without reason. In our family we were taught to be strong, to ask questions, and to be brave. I was always like that. They approached us and asked us what we were doing at that late hour. First, I asked them why we had to answer their questions. They responded that they were officers. I said that I wanted to see their identification cards. They showed us their cards. One of them looked 34 or 35, and the other one looked 27 or 28. The man whose name was Mohammadi or Mohammadian looked older. I did not see the younger officer's identification card. The older officer showed his card and asked questions, and I had to answer him. He showed me two cards: one identified him as member of the *basij* and the other card identified him as an employee of the Ministry of Intelligence and National Security. At the top of the card it said "Ministry of Intelligence and National Security."
4. He asked: Why are you here at this late hour? I said that we had parked our car up the street. He asked who owned the car. I said that it was mine. He asked for my documents, and I showed them. He started searching my car, and he found a pack of condoms in the dashboard. He asked: What is this? "Condoms," I said. He asked: What is this doing in your car? I said that I bought it from a pharmacy, and if it was a bad thing they would not be selling it at the pharmacy. He said: The pharmacy is for someone who has a wife. Do you have a wife? He took the condoms, and I could not say anything because someone who is unmarried cannot be involved with another person in Iran. He did not know that I was gay. Of course, at that late hour, and while I was in the middle of the street, I could not tell him that if I wanted to, I could enter into a temporary marriage¹ with anyone. It would be funny if a 22-year old man says this. He told us to get lost. He harassed us a little and then he was gone. They had motorbikes. But they were back after a minute or two.
5. His pretext for accosting us was that we were not wearing appropriate clothes. In the Islamic Republic of Iran it is possible to make an issue out of any insignificant matter. During that period there were a lot of restrictions on what people wore. I think it was during the period that Guidance Patrols² were active. One of the unpleasant things about the low-level officers in the Islamic Republic of Iran is that

¹ Temporary marriage or *mut'ah* is a form of marriage allowed under Shia Islamic law. In Shia Islam a man can have up to four permanent wives and an unlimited number of temporary wives. Duration of the temporary marriage and the compensation paid to the woman are determined in the marriage contract. Inheritance law or other spousal support duties are not applicable to a temporary marriage unless the parties agree to it in the marriage contract. The temporary marriage may be renewed, and Shia law does not specify a minimum or a maximum amount of time as the duration of a temporary marriage.

² Guidance Patrols are special police that enforce Iran's strict Islamic code, particularly regarding what women wear in public.

they enjoy harassing people. It is fun for them to cause fear and panic among people like me and then sit in a mosque and tell each other stories of how they harassed a flamboyant guy or how they made a girl shiver from fear. All they are taught is how to strike fear [in people], how to beat people, how to demonstrate no compassion, and [in some cases] how to rape. I say this because this actually happened to me. Maybe I wouldn't believe it if I had only heard it and not experienced it myself.

6. They came back and told me that I had to go with them. "Why?" I asked. They said that my outfit was not appropriate. I asked: Where will you take me? They said that they will take me to the *monkarat*³ office. I asked: Why should I go there? They said because I had to give them a pledge that I won't ever wear an outfit like that. At that point I suggested giving them a bribe. Maybe it would be more appropriate to call it extortion money. The difference between a bribe and extortion money is that the term bribery is appropriate for situations in which you want something done and paying a bribe works to your advantage. Extortion, however, refers to situations when you know you have no power. You pay them so that they will leave you alone. It is based on fear, and the other person takes the money because he knows that he can. He is not afraid of extorting you, but the person who accepts a bribe is afraid of getting caught.
7. They decided to take me with them. I wanted to give them 10,000 to 20,000 tomans. [\$10 to \$20⁴]. I even wanted to borrow money from my friends and hand it to them. My dad had just passed away and I had nobody to support me if I ended up in *monkarat*. I had my mother, but I did not want her to go to such places because [those places are not fit for women]. But they had made up their minds. One of them went with the motorbike and the other one and I walked together. They said that their car was parked 100 meters from the park. It was a Peykan⁵ with police tags. They told my friends that they could go.
8. They had picked me. If I want to specifically say what the difference between me and my friends was, I have to say that there was no difference. I mentioned this over there as well. I said: I'm like my friends. They said: No, we decide. They put me in the car. As far as I can remember, *monkarat* was on Vozara Avenue, close to Arjantin Square. They drove towards the south [of the city]. I asked whether they were taking me to *monkarat*. They said: No, we are taking you to Shahpour Avenue police headquarters. I said: That is where they take drug dealers, murderers and criminals; I don't belong there. They said: Now we are going there, and we will show you.
9. The only thing I dared to do was call my aunt's husband. I was sitting in the back of the car and they were sitting in front. I dialed the number without telling them. I think that call was the only thing that helped me, because it may have made them think twice before harming me [further] after they raped me. They suddenly realized that I was talking on the phone. From childhood, I used to call my aunt's husband "uncle". He loved us very much, and he was very kind to us. He is a colonel, and he works at the Ministry of Intelligence and National Security (MOIS). I called my uncle and told him that two people had arrested me and were telling me that I had to go to police headquarters at Shahpour Avenue to give my word that I will not wear inappropriate clothes. He asked me to pass the phone on to them. I gave my cell phone to Mr. Mohammadi [or Mohammadian]. My uncle started talking to him. He gave his name and his security code at the MOIS. He asked what I had done. Mr.

³ The Office of Social Vice, commonly known as *monkarat*, is an office run by the Iranian police. This office detains individuals who have been arrested for engaging in activities that are deemed to be social vices in Iran, such as drinking alcohol, using drugs, or mixing with the opposite sex. Arrested individuals may be prosecuted and punished for their conduct by the judiciary. The term *monkarat* is the plural for the term "vice" in Arabic.

⁴ This is an estimate based on the exchange rate in fall 2007.

⁵ Peykan is an automobile which was assembled in Iran from the late 1960s through the mid 2000s, and for years it was the most popular automobile in Iran.

Mohammadi said that my outfit was not appropriate, and that I must sign a pledge stating that I would not wear inappropriate clothes. My uncle asked why they were taking me to Shahpour Avenue headquarters. They said that I must sign my pledge over there.

10. My uncle told them to let me go. They answered that it was impossible. My uncle told them that a superior was telling them to let me go, and he told them who his superiors were and who worked under him. He has some influence. I specifically remember that the officer said that he too knew Ahmadinejad, but knowing influential people was irrelevant. My uncle told the officer that he would learn a lesson when he would be reprimanded the next day. They went back and forth, but the officer did not take my uncle seriously. They drove towards Imam Hossein Square and turned right on the first street, which I think was Khaje Nasir al-Din Tousi Avenue.
11. At that point the younger guy sat in the back seat. He held my head down and twisted it. As I was in that position, I could see that [the car] was passing by a few side streets. I think we passed three or four streets and turned left. [Mohammadi/Mohammadian] did not drive far into that street. He stopped in front of a house. They took me out of the car and then took me inside the house. It was a three-story house. They took me to the basement. The basement looked like a *tekieh* or a *hosseinieh*.⁶ It was carpeted. There were flags all around the room bearing Imam Hossein's name. There was a table in the corner of the room. The older man sat down and leaned on a column and made me sit in front of him. He put his pistol and wireless radio on the table and said that they knew that I was gay. He used inappropriate and vulgar words.
12. When you're in that situation you're so scared that you cannot think. He told me to get up and take off my clothes. I asked: Why should I remove my clothes? He said: Just do as I tell you. Don't ask questions. When I asked again, he beat me. He said: When I say take them off, just do it. He got up and started punching and kicking me and swearing at me. He asked the other guy to undress me, and he obliged. I had shaved my body. He asked me why I had shaved my body. I didn't know what to say. I told them that I was body-building, and that my trainer had told me to shave so that my muscles could develop. It was common for body-builders to shave their bodies. He asked: So you are body-building? Why? He went on asking similar questions.
13. There was a full bathroom on that floor. The bathroom was large and its floor was covered by ceramic tiles. The younger man told me that I had to sleep with the older one. I asked them to let me go. He said that he was powerless, and he told me to do as the other guy asked. I went to the bathroom. First the younger one raped me. Then the older one did the same. All that time I was very afraid that they would kill me after raping me out of the fear that they could get caught. Nobody had their number or any other information leading to them. They only had my phone number, which [my captors] would not answer [if they killed me].
14. After they were done, Mohammadi, or Mohammadian, told me to put my clothes back on. He slapped me a few more times. He took both my home and cell phone numbers. He also took my mother's number from my cell phone. He took some pictures of me while I was naked. He told me that if I said anything anywhere, they would spread my pictures around. They took me at 12:30 in the morning and they were done around 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. I put my clothes on. We drove from Khaje-Nasir Street towards Enqelab Avenue. They dropped me off there, and I took a taxi to get to my car. I drove home after I got to my car.

⁶ A *tekieh* or a *hosseinieh* is a large public place dedicated to religious services, especially Shia' mourning rituals.

Aftermath of the Rape

15. I was scared for a long time. I was worried that they would distribute my pictures. Who could have found out who has distributed the pictures? I was also worried that they would call again and harass me. After that incident I saw a doctor. They are mindless individuals, and there is no way to know who else they might have raped. I thought about which doctor to see. There were two doctors whom I had previously told I was gay. I went to see one of them. I told him what had happened. He ordered an HIV test right away, but he mentioned that it would take between 3 to 4 months to know the results. He told me that I had to wait. Medical facilities in Iran are different from here. In some hospitals, if you have diabetes, you have to say that you are an emergency case if you need to get your results in a few days; otherwise, they take a month before they give your test results.
16. I saw Mr. Mohammadi [or Mohammadian] once during the 2009 presidential campaign. I don't remember the exact location, but Mr. Ahmadinejad was scheduled to give a speech near Hasanabad Street and Park-e Shahr. I went with four or five other university students to hear his speech. I was not political at all, but I was active in Mousavi's election campaign. I wanted Mr. Mousavi to become president at that time. When Mr. Mousavi became a presidential candidate, I was against Ahmadinejad, and I did not agree with his policies, and now we can see the results of his policies. There were lots of people who were certain that it was impossible for Mousavi to become president.
17. My friends left the car and I wanted to park the car. I was blocked by a huge crowd. I saw a man who was very similar to Mr. Mohammadi, and I was wondering whether I had seen him. He walked towards the car and asked me if I knew him. I said no, and he ducked his head into the car and said something very vulgar. To say it politely, he said: I am the same person who raped you. I was so scared that I called my friends and falsely told them that I was told by a *basiji* that there was no more room and we had to return. My friends and I returned. I could not stay there any longer to listen to Ahmadinejad even though we could hear him. I was too scared to stay. The peace and security that I now have in Canada, and the fact that some time has passed, has made it less of a psychological burden, and easier for me to handle. I may even go as far as saying that I want to completely forget that episode. But I certainly cannot.
18. When I say I have been raped, it means that I have really felt violated in every sense. Every bit of your existence is in pain and agony, and it will never go away. The humiliation will never go away. You will never forget that you could not defend yourself against them. You will never forget how scared you were. You will never forget how they insulted you, and how they destroyed your honor while you could not say anything and you had to keep quiet. This happened to me just because I was gay. I was afraid that this incident could lead to further investigation [of me]. Proving that I was gay was not difficult; a visit to the medical examiner's office would show that I was gay.⁷

Expulsion from University

19. I acquiesced on many occasions. I was an electronic engineering student in Tehran province. I was qualified, and on the entrance exam I obtained the score required to study electronic engineering. I can say that electronic engineering is the most difficult field in engineering. I worked very hard.

⁷ Rectal exams are used by the medical examiner's office to determine whether a person has received anal sex. Such exams may be ordered in the course of a judicial proceeding, or in the course of an administrative process needed to authorize a sex-change operation.

20. I was expelled from university in 2010. It is interesting to note that I was not in a relationship with anyone at the university. I had only told one of my friends that I was gay. When I was in university, there was a girl who was attracted to me and spent a lot of time with me. This was very painful for me because I had no interest in girls, and I get apprehensive when I find out that a girl is getting close to me and is planning to get into a relationship with me. I have no interest in women, and I do not like to be placed in certain circumstances. She was a beautiful girl, and she was the top student in our class. I had a very close friend in university. He constantly told me that she was a very nice girl and asked me why I was not interested. My friend and I were very close. We were like brothers. I told him the truth. I told him that I was gay and that I had no interest in that girl or any other girl. I talked to him about the issues that a gay person faces. Based on what he later told me, I think my friend wanted to help me to get out of that situation. As a result, he told that girl that I was gay so that she could understand why I was not interested in her. My friend explained to her that I did not want to lie to her because I did not want to hurt her feelings and cause her any pain. That girl foolishly spread the news in the university.
21. She was too proud to accept the fact that I simply did not want to be with her. Therefore, she told other students that I did not want to be with her because I was gay or a “sissy.” The *herasat*⁸ office at our university heard the news. In every university there are students who are religious or belong to the *basij*. They are very conservative and they act as spies. They reported me to the university’s *herasat*. *Herasat* summoned me and told me that they had evidence that I was gay. They had summoned that girl and asked her about what she had said, and she had confirmed that she had heard it from my friend.
22. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, you are punished based on your circumstances. When they want to punish you, they will not take you to a room and tell you that you are condemned to death because you are gay. They must have some evidence, especially because Iran is under scrutiny for violation of human rights. They always look for some evidence to cover up their unacceptable behavior. In my case, they asked the girl who was interested in me whether I was gay. She said she did not hear it directly from me, but that she had heard it from my friend. They brought in my friend and he was so afraid that he admitted that I told him myself that I was gay. *Herasat* summoned me and told me that there were allegations that I was gay, and that a three-person committee would be formed to decide my case. I was very scared.
23. I was 21 at the time. Prior to that, I had studied economics for three semesters at Qeshm Islamic Azad University. After my dad passed away, I did not stay in that university and went back to Tehran, which delayed my education for two years. I was the oldest child in my family, and I did my best to gain admission into a university in Tehran or its suburbs so that I could spend more time with my family.
24. [After I was brought into the *herasat* office] I called Mehdi, my boyfriend, and told him what had happened. He told me not to worry and he promised that he would do his best to help me out. By that time we had been partners for about four years. I was once raped by the Iranian police, and I was very scared of their violent behavior. I knew that when they want to make a decision about you, they act like know-nothings.
25. Mehdi called Mr. Zandi, the president of cultural affairs in our university. He was a close friend of my boyfriend’s. He used to be my boyfriend’s professor in the University of Garmsar, and later he

⁸ Every university and governmental organization in Iran has an intelligence and security office known as *herasat*. This office is in charge of the university or organization’s security, and monitors it for any subversive act or any conduct in violation of Iran’s strict Islamic code.

was put in charge of cultural affairs in our university. He was familiar with *herasat*, and he had some influence in university affairs. My boyfriend called him and told him that I was summoned to *herasat*. Mr. Zandi knew a few people at *herasat*. He called them and asked about my situation, and they told him the story. He called Mehdi and told him that I should meet with him. I went to see him. I was forced to explain my situation to him, and I had to trust him because he wanted to help me. He told me that the best solution for me was to withdraw from the university because my situation could get worse. I told him that I was in the middle of my exams, and that I wanted to finish them. He told me that at the minimum they would expel me from the university, and that I would not be able to enroll in another university. He also told me that if my case was to go before higher-level officials, I would pay a high price.

26. I was not doing well emotionally. After two or three days Mehdi told me to pack my stuff and stay with him at his family's country house for a while until we hear something. We stayed together for two to three days. Then my mother called me. She said that there was a letter for me from the university. She had not yet opened it. I asked my mother to open the letter. Even though the committee was supposed to meet 10 days after *herasat* gave me the notice, they scheduled the meeting 5 to 6 days after that day. I went to their meeting and they simply expelled me from university. This was in May or June 2010.
27. One of the officials in that meeting was from the headquarters of Azad University on Pasdaran Avenue. Security officers wear their own uniforms with their own stickers. They are not plainclothes agents. They work under the supervision of the MOIS. *Herasat* normally deals with two types of students. The first group includes political activists, and the other group includes members of the Islamic Association who engage in cultural or religious activities critical of the government. *Herasat* does not bother students who are not active in either group. If they arrest a male and female student together, *herasat* does not deal with them, but they might be questioned by low-level officers.
28. That meeting lasted half an hour. They talked to me in a harsh tone, and they used offensive words. The meeting was not formal at all. They did not have any evidence to support their case. They did not have eyewitnesses to my homosexual acts, nor did they have several witnesses who had heard about my homosexuality from me.⁹ I had told someone that I was gay and that person told someone else, and the news spread around in a rather childish manner. They did not ask me any questions in that meeting.
29. The words and language they used against me were impolite and offensive. They told me that they could have punished me harder. They thought they were too kind and generous towards me by only expelling me from university. It was not mandatory for the two individuals who were witnesses against me to be present at the meeting; they had already been questioned and they had already confirmed that I was gay. They signed a document saying that that I had indicated that I was gay. I clearly remember that I received the dismissal letter on July 1, 2010. The entire process took about a month. The letter contained this phrase: "Incompatibility with Islamic mores in the university". This "incompatibility" could range from what they referred to as "deformed" hairstyles¹⁰ to the most

⁹ According to Islamic law, sodomy is punishable by death and it can only be proved if there are four male witnesses or three male and two female witnesses. In this case, however, the witness was being expelled by an administrative body for "acts incompatible with Islamic mores." The evidentiary requirements for establishing sodomy were not applicable in this case because he was not charged with sodomy per se.

¹⁰ Iranian police occasionally start campaigns against what they consider to be immoral or Western-style wardrobes or hairstyles. While women could get arrested for not adequately covering their hair, men may also be arrested if their hairstyles are deemed un-Islamic. According to a 2007 BBC Persian report, young men arrested for "deviant" hairstyles would be released if their families promised that the young men would change their hairstyles. Following their release, they would have to show to the police that they have, in fact, changed their hairstyles. In 2010, Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance unveiled

dreadful and improper acts in the university campus. It was not clear which categorization applied to me. They should have warned me before expelling me. One has to have a previous record before being disciplined.

30. I remember July 1, 2010 very well because I had a rhinoplasty that morning. I was still sedated when I got home. I saw a letter with my name on it on the electricity meter box. I was still dizzy. I picked up the letter. When I fully recovered after a week, I suddenly remembered that I had a letter with my name on it somewhere. I found the letter a week after I had received it. I read that letter on July 8, 2010. It said that I was expelled from university. This was another instance of discrimination.
31. The right to education is among the most basic rights of young citizens of any country. This right is taken away from many young students for different reasons. Some got involved in the 2009 protests, and many of them were expelled from university, while others were killed and imprisoned. Some were raped, which should be examined in its own right. Many of those young adults were fired from their jobs. These things happen to gay people as well.
32. I did not try to get into another university after I was expelled. A lot had happened to me. I wanted to leave Iran since 2006-2007. I was really tired.

Professional and Societal Discrimination against Homosexuals

33. I have a friend named Ali. He was a university professor in Semnan. I remember that one day the university *herasat* asked him why he did not participate in the congregational prayer. He responded that he prayed at home. This led to an investigation. They reviewed his military exemption, which was issued because of his homosexuality.¹¹ Military exemptions have specific codes. Psychological issues have a specific code. For example, if a code has ten digits, the last two digits signify the specific category for the exemption. They checked my friend's exemption, and since it was issued because of his homosexuality, he was deemed as a problematic individual and he was fired. He was young, around 33 or 34, and he was [academically and professionally] successful. He had moved to Semnan from Tehran. My point is that there are many similar instances of discrimination.
34. I had a very difficult time as a gay person in Iran. My family, in particular, gave me a very hard time. When my brother found out that I am gay, we got into a physical fight. He attacked me with a knife. My mother threw me out of the house.
35. I did not go to a hospital when I was injured. [Later when I reached Turkey years after the incident] the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Turkey asked me why I had not filed a complaint against my brother. I answered that if I had gone to the hospital or if I had filed a complaint and I was asked who had injured you, I had to say it was my brother. If I filed a complaint, what do you think would have happened if my brother would have said that I was gay in court? I had a black eye, and a blood clot was clouding my eyesight for about an entire day. I was in bad shape.
36. I knew a doctor named Shahram. He was a general practitioner. I was his patient since I was a child. I told him that I got into a fight with my brother. He put a bandage on my wound, but he didn't use

“acceptable” hairstyles for men. A report on this story along with pictures of acceptable hairstyles is available at <http://fararu.com/fa/news/51388/عکس-ممدل-های-موی-مورد-دندانپد-وزارت-ارشاد/51388>

¹¹ Iranian law provides for exemption from the compulsory military service due to psychological disorders, among other things. Gay and transgender men may be given an exemption under the psychological disorder category provided that they undergo a medical evaluation and go through several administrative steps. Transgender individuals will be required to undergo sex reassignment surgery to obtain a permanent exemption.

any stitches. He said that stitches will leave scars, and he gave me an ointment that made the scar disappear over time. This happened in May 2006. My father had just passed away. My mother threw me out of the house when she found out I was gay. I went to my aunt's house. My aunts are young and they are about my age. I was very close to one of my aunts, and she knew that I was gay. I talked to her a lot and she talked to my mother. We saw a psychiatrist for a while. The psychiatrist told my mother that I am gay and asked her not to bother me.

37. The psychiatrist said that if he were to take sides, as an Iranian and a father, he would take my mother's side, but as a doctor, he would side with me. As a doctor he is supposed to help me. After years of education to become a physician, he did not realize that as a human being I have certain rights. How could he side with my mother? What rights did my mother have? I'm the one who prefers to sleep with a man and to love a man. So, my mother has no right to decide whom I should or should not be with. As a doctor who has gone through all that education, how could he give this right to my mother? This means that even doctors discriminate. It does not make much of a difference. I put up with a lot of discrimination. I was subjected to a lot of verbal abuse in my family.
38. My family did not report me to the authorities. I am not sure why. But I think my mother was afraid that something could happen to me. After all, she has maternal instincts. Just like the psychiatrist who was not aware of his perception, my mother was also unaware of her perception. If she really wanted to put herself in the position to make a just decision, she should have given me the right to decide for myself. A free and mature human being must be able to make his or her decisions. Even if he or she makes a mistake, he or she will realize it and will change. This is the easiest way.

Living as a Homosexual in the Islamic Republic of Iran

39. Since the moment you realize you are gay or that you belong to an LGBT subgroup, you know that you will be discriminated against. One form of discrimination is that your identity as a human being is denied. They deny your right to be a human being, because you know that if you speak of your rights, terrible things might happen to you. Your family, your society, your government, your friends, your workplace—all of them might do terrible things to you. Discrimination could be everywhere. Certainly, what I witnessed and experienced has always existed [in the society]. The heaviest discrimination is to live under constant suppression. You cannot express who you are, what you want, or what you believe in, and you cannot talk about your sexual orientation. This is the first form of discrimination [you face]. There are other forms of discrimination too; for instance, your parents might treat you differently compared to your siblings.
40. The Islamic Republic of Iran also discriminates against you as an LGBT person. Discrimination also exists in the society, and people may have negative views about you, and they may sexually abuse you, mistreat you, or discriminate against you in other ways. These are all forms of discrimination, and as you grow up, discrimination will take various forms and get more serious and more complicated. These kinds of discrimination continue as long as you live in Iran. When I was in Turkey I also experienced some instances of discrimination because Turkey's culture is close to Iranian culture. There is this traditional religious belief system, along with certain specific notions for what being a man means. Discrimination also exists in Canada, but it is at a much lower level because, unlike Iran, the law is on your side.
41. The most serious discrimination that exists in Iran is that laws are based on Islamic Shari'a law, and Shari'a law has specific laws about homosexuals. We should question why there should be a law on this topic in the first place. Next, now that there is a law, if a society does not accept this law, who has the authority to determine who should or should not accept this law? There are so many things in Iran

that I, as a gay person, cannot accept, but I have to accept them because I am not in the position to reject them, or it can be argued that it is the right of other people to demand it. As a gay person, my first problem in Iran, and the most important discrimination I face, is that a law which I do not accept says that I have to die because I am attracted to someone of the same sex. This attraction may be sexual, emotional, psychological, or even due to financial dependence or any other reason.

42. If this is what Islam says, well, I may not believe in that religion at all. As long as I do not believe in that religion, then, it is not necessary to apply the laws of that religion to me. The most serious discrimination is to deny your natural right to life. Similarly, other rights will be taken from you. The more power they have, the more rights they will take away from you. If you are dealing with a judge, he will take away your right to life, and if you are dealing with the president of a university, he will dismiss you from the university. The police might ask you for a bribe or rape you; but if they can't, they might send you to court, and the judge will take away your right to life.
43. I could not defend myself because I was gay. For most of my life I felt guilty for being gay, and I wished that I was not gay. Why should a human being wish to not be who he or she really is? This feeling is much more painful than standing in front of a mirror and wishing that one's nose would be smaller. And it's really bad when you cannot accept who you are, and to disapprove of yourself in the same way that others disapprove of you. These are all forms of discriminations. It is very painful to be content at being whipped so that you can avoid being executed. It is very difficult to accept sleeping with someone under duress in order to avoid death. It is painful to have unprotected sex with someone that you do not know. These are all painful and terrible things to experience.