

MUHSIN HENDRICKS

b. June 1967

d. February 15, 2025

ISLAMIC LGBTQ+ ACTIVIST

**He was an openly
gay imam and a
pioneering champion
of LGBTQ+ Muslims.**

*“The need to be authentic is
greater than the fear of death.”*

Muhsin Hendricks is widely regarded as the world's first openly gay imam. A scholar, an activist, and a pioneering champion of LGBTQ+ Muslims, he compassionately challenged traditional views of homosexuality in Islam.

Hendricks was born in Cape Town, South Africa, to traditional Indonesian Muslim parents. His grandfather was the community imam. From 1990 to 1994, Hendricks attended the University of Islamic Studies in Karachi, Pakistan, and later received a diploma in counseling and communications from South African College for Applied Psychology.

After completing his religious training, Hendricks returned to Cape Town, where he initially served as a co-imam at a local mosque. He went on to teach in other mosques and madrasas.

In 1991, Hendricks was wed to a woman in an arranged marriage. They had three children together before divorcing in 1996. After the divorce, he spent 80 days intensely praying and fasting before publicly coming out as gay. Hendricks was immediately dismissed from his teaching roles as an imam and shunned by other clerics. In response to his ostracism, he created Inner Circle (later renamed the Al-Fitrah Foundation), an organization to help LGBTQ+ Muslims reconcile their sexuality with their faith and to provide a safe space to practice Islam without judgment.

Hendricks officiated at same-sex marriage ceremonies and entered his own marriage with a Hindu man in 2006. He wrote numerous articles and facilitated workshops on Islam and sexual diversity in South Africa, America, and Europe. In 2007, he appeared in the groundbreaking documentary “A Jihad for Love,” about LGBTQ+ Muslims, and faced harsh condemnation from Islamic leaders who expelled him from the faith by formal decree.

In 2011, despite continuing opposition, Hendricks opened Masjidul Ghurbaah, an inclusive mosque in Cape Town. He directed the documentary film, “Fitrah: Negotiating Islam, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” in 2013, and established the Al-Ghurbaah Foundation in 2018 to continue his advocacy work. He traveled widely, working with international organizations to promote justice, equality, and interfaith support for LGBTQ+ Muslims.

Following the release of a documentary about Hendricks, “The Radical” (2022), the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) issued a fatwa against him — a nonbinding decree based on Sharia law, reinforcing Islam's stance against gay Muslims.

Over the years, Hendricks received numerous death threats for his activism. In 2025, on his way to officiate at a heterosexual interfaith wedding, he was assassinated by a masked gunman. Although the murder was condemned by the MJC and the South African Department of Justice, it was not labeled a hate crime.

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