

The relative freedom of a newly democratic Iraq and the recent improvement in security have allowed a gay subculture to flourish here. The response has been swift and deadly.

In the past two months, the bodies of as many as 25 boys and men suspected of being gay have turned up in the huge Shiite enclave of Sadr City, the police and friends of the dead say. Most have been shot, some multiple times. Several have been found with the word "pervert" in Arabic on notes attached to their bodies, the police said.

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