



Please Add Your Voice to the Global Call for Action on LGBTQ+ Rights!

September, 18, 2023

Under embargo until 9.18.23

Statement by Civil Society Organizations on Urgent Action Needed for LGBTQ+ Rights

We, the undersigned Civil Society Organizations, Donors, and Implementing Non-Governmental Organizations from across the globe, unite in a collective call to action addressed to the United Nations and its Member State governments as the General Assembly convenes in the 78th session, *'Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals toward peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for All.'*

Our shared concern stems from the alarming rise in anti-LGBTQ laws, human rights violations, and discrimination worldwide, with a particular focus on recent developments in Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia, and the United States.

We recall how in 2015, twelve United Nations agencies issued a joint statement affirming the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTQI) individuals. The joint UN statement of 2015, *Ending Violence and Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People*, set forth a comprehensive roadmap for governments to combat violence and discrimination.

This historic statement underscored the intrinsic connection between human rights violations against LGBTQ people and their adverse consequences, including health disparities, societal inequities, family disintegration, social and economic exclusion, and stunted opportunities for development and economic growth. It called for improvements in the investigation and reporting of hate crimes, torture, and ill-treatment, while also urging governments to review and repeal laws and discriminatory policies that target individuals based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. It explicitly urges governments to repeal laws that criminalize LGBTQI relationships and deny them basic human rights.

In 2023, we have witnessed an unprecedented surge in discriminatory legislation worldwide, severely impacting human rights for LGBTQ people. New anti-LGBTQ laws criminalize individuals based on their identity and relationships, making same-sex relationships illegal in some regions. These laws prescribe harsh penalties for LGBTQ individuals engaged in consensual adult relationships and subject them to arrests, detentions, and even life imprisonment or the death penalty in certain countries.



We have witnessed a troubling rise in legislation calling for the policing and incitement of community violence against LGBTQ individuals, even by their own families and communities. We are witnessing a ban of media and education about LGBTQ issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

These regressive laws not only infringe upon the basic rights and existence of LGBTQ individuals, but represent a significant setback to the global progress in human rights. They compromise democratic governance and constitutional rights in many affected countries. The anti-LGBTQ+ laws, governmental and community actions serve as a dangerous distraction from pressing political, economic, and social inequalities that persist in many societies. These laws run counter to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the UN's broader embrace of human rights.

Such anti-LGBTQ laws, legal and regulatory barriers undermine the health and human rights of LGBTQ individuals. In some countries, they not only infringe on their basic rights, but their very existence – their human right to life.

The world cannot stand silent or idle in the face of the rollback of these essential rights. **It is time for the UN and Member States to translate the 2015 statement into action.** It is time for the UN, Member States, and governments worldwide to intensify their efforts in combatting homophobic and transphobic discrimination, violence, and abuses against LGBTQ individuals and families. Inaction and neglect are unacceptable.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the UN and Member State governments to:

Adopt and Implement the 2015 Joint UN Statement: We urge the UN and its Member States to fully embrace and implement the 2015 joint UN statement on LGBTQI rights as a cornerstone for global action, reinforcing their commitment to upholding LGBTQI rights.

Remove Discriminatory, Punitive Laws, and Legal Barriers: We urgently request the *United Nations* to advocate for the immediate repeal of anti-LGBTQ laws and regulations that criminalize individuals based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Collaborate with the UN: We urge *Member States* to collaborate with the UN and its agencies to accelerate the removal of these discriminatory laws, legal and regulatory barriers and to promote comprehensive protections for LGBTQ people, ensuring these are culturally and linguistically relevant.



Develop Tailored Approaches and Protections: We call on *all governments* to develop and promote a comprehensive package of culturally- and linguistically-appropriate protections to ensure the rights and well-being of LGBTQ people and communities.

Promote Awareness: We call for widespread initiatives *by the UN and its agencies and all governments* to inform citizens about the rights and dignity of LGBTQ individuals to foster greater understanding, empathy, and support for LGBTQ rights.

Provide Technical Support: We call on the United Nations and its agencies to actively provide technical support to relevant agencies and organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, and civil society stakeholders, who are working to advance LGBTQ people’s human rights.

Ensure Accountability: We believe it is important to monitor and investigate the connections between the anti-democratic attacks in the US and Africa and elsewhere. We call on The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to spearhead an investigation on behalf of the UN and its Member States, representing civil societies, with input from affected LGBTQ communities. These anti-LGBTQ attacks are anti-human rights.

We call on the UN, Member States, and other governments to set up well-funded and coordinated accountability and oversight mechanisms to track legislation and progress on LGBTQI rights that assure the meaningful involvement of affected LGBTQI communities. These calls-to-action emphasize the urgent need for action necessary to address the recent rollback of legal and civil rights and protections for LGBTQI individuals and families, and the critical role that the UN, Member State governments and non-governmental parties must play in this effort. Such actions will build upon the UN’s commitment to its Charter.

We also extend our Call to Action to citizens worldwide to promote and respect LGBTQ individuals and the right of every person to live with dignity and safe from violence. We believe that only through joint worldwide efforts can we dismantle the barriers that perpetuate discrimination and violence against LGBTQ individuals and achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

To achieve this, we must also mobilize and sustain funding for LGBTQ communities and civil society actors that they crucially need to participate in the advancement of their rights.

As representatives of Civil Society Organizations, Donors, and NGOs globally, we reaffirm our commitment to the principles of equality, justice, and human rights for all, and to living in a world where the human rights of LGBTQ individuals are respected and protected, and where every individual can live free from discrimination and fear, with access to justice when their rights are violated or threatened.



SIGN HERE TO JOIN THE CALL FOR ACTION!

<https://forms.gle/B7Qm242SfpZEEVdcA>

In solidarity,

1. African Services Committee
2. Convening for Equality – Uganda
3. Human Rights Campaign
4. Outright International
5. The Council for Global Equality
6. Frontline AIDS
7. African Alliance
8. Action Against AIDS Germany
9. Advocates for Prevention of AIDS in Africa
10. Africa Japan Forum
11. African Key Populations Experts Group
12. Cam Foundation
13. Cooley's Anemia Foundation
14. DAP Health
15. Daphne Jena
16. Fierte Canada Pride
17. FrancoQueer
18. Frontline AIDS
19. Global Network of Black People working in HIV
20. HIV Legal Network / Reseau juridique VIH
21. HIV Justice Network
22. Julie DeMarchi
23. Leona Foundation
24. Mary Pollorena
25. Mzilikazi Miners Exminers Associations
26. NAESM
27. Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants - OCASI
28. Prevention Access Campaign
29. Rainbow Railroad
30. Rural Women Empowerment Network
31. Southern Africa Miners Association (SAMA)
32. TB Proof
33. University of Pretoria
34. WILPF Canada

(list in formation...global sign on continues)