

# Action needed to stop violations of LGBT people's rights worldwide, expert tells UN

27 October 2017 – Immediate action is needed to stop the horrific violations of human rights of people around the world based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, a United Nations independent expert said Friday, delivering his first report to UN Member States in New York.

“It is unconscionable that people with an actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression different from a particular social norm, [are targeted](#) for violence and discrimination in many parts of the world,” said Vitit Muntarbhorn, the UN’s first independent expert on the matter.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people suffer a crucible of egregious violations, including killings, rape, mutilation, torture, arbitrary detention, abduction, harassment, physical and mental assaults, he said, noting that they are subjected to lashings and forced surgical interventions, bullying from a young age, incitement to hatred and pressures leading to suicide.

“More than 70 countries around the world today still criminalize same-sex relations, and in some of them the death penalty may be applied,” he added, presenting his report to the UN General Assembly’s main body dealing with human rights and social and humanitarian issues ([Third Committee](#)).

Mr. Muntarbhorn said all laws criminalizing same-sex relationships should be removed from the statute books.

“There is a need for effective anti-discrimination measures covering both the public and private spheres,” the expert said, stressing the need to build a community open to understanding and respecting sexual and gender diversity.

Human rights defenders are also increasingly targeted for their work in raising issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, the expert said, adding that this is another area of great concern.

“Non-governmental organizations, human rights defenders and activists, as well as independent national human rights institutions, play a crucial role in the advancement of an inclusive agenda for all without discrimination and distinction, including through the promotion of understanding of and respect for human rights and gender diversity,” Mr. Muntarbhorn said. “They are agents of change which can activate significant reform processes.”

He said the establishment last year of his mandate to promote action against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

was a major step forward.

UN independent experts and Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.