

Violence against the LGBTI community: UN focuses on 'need to challenge hatred'

As the United Nations celebrates [70 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), a high-level event on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary killings of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) persons around the world, heard event moderator and Executive Director of OutRight Action International, Jessica Stern, describe the challenges facing the community as nothing short of a “global crisis”.

“It should be obvious that there are many different ways to be a human being,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [Michelle Bachelet](#), told the meeting. “We need to respect and embrace these differences – not criminalize them, not attack people, not deprive them of equal rights or the protection of the law, just because they are seen as ‘different’”.

Though there is a gap in data collection, according to the UN independent expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, [Victor Madrigal-Borloz](#), “every day, millions of lesbians, gays, bisexual, trans and other gender non-conforming people, are subjected to acts of great cruelty based solely on who they are or who they choose to love or desire.”

This cruel treatment includes killings, violent attacks, torture, arbitrary detention, forced marriage, denial of rights to assembly and expression, medical violence and discrimination in accessing health care. LGBTI people also face discrimination in education, employment, and housing. In seven countries, same sex relationships are punishable by death, in complete violation of fundamental human rights.

“There should be nothing ‘controversial’ about stopping people being murdered, or executed by agents of the State, simply because of who they are or whom they love,” stressed Ms. Bachelet. “Tackling extreme violence does not require new norms,” she added.

There should be nothing ‘controversial’ about stopping people being murdered, or executed by agents of the State, simply because of who they are or whom they love – *UN human rights chief, Michelle Bachelet*

To date, only one UN General Assembly resolution addressing violence includes explicit reference to sexual orientation and gender identity, while none refer to sex characteristics.

The resolution on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions urges States to “protect the life of all people” and calls upon States to

“investigate killings based on discriminatory grounds”, with “sexual orientation and gender identity” mentioned in that context.

“Most countries do not track homophobic and transphobic crimes. The result is impunity,” regretted the UN human rights chief. “Too many victims go without recognition, remedy or justice. Too many perpetrators are free to strike again, undeterred by the prospect of rule of law.

Ms. Bachelet welcomed recent legislative changes that have happened in Chile – her own country, which she was twice elected to lead – and India, noting that “this important discussion is taking place all over the world”.

“But we need more. We need to change minds,” she insisted, stressing that “education, education, education” would be the only way to roll back prejudice and hate, which are “at the core of the killings and violence against the LGBTI community.”

Among the speakers of the event was Robin Hammond, world renown National Geographic photographer, and author of the powerful photo-series ‘Where Love is Illegal’; a collection of stories of discrimination and survival. “Inaction means death,” he said, having witnessed first-hand the suffering of LGBTI people across the world.

“How many more must be raped and mutilated and murdered before we can say never again?”, he asked.

[UN Chief joins world leaders in calling for greater investment in Africa’s young people](#)

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday joined world leaders in calling for greater investment in jobs for young people in Africa, calling them the continent’s “greatest asset.”

“Investment is crucial to harness Africa’s youth dividend,” Mr. Guterres [said](#) at an event organized by the United Kingdom, Canada, Ghana and Rwanda on the margins of the annual high-level General Assembly in New York.

He cited the need for investments in health and education, as well as in science, technology and industrialization.

Today, one-third of African youth are unemployed; another third are vulnerably employed or in low-value jobs in the informal sector. The Secretary-General said this reinforces poverty and inequality.

Young African women are even worse off, he pointed out, noting that it is estimated that gender gaps in the labour force cost Africa \$105 billion in 2014 alone.

At a time when the rest of the world will be ageing, Africa's youth – with their energy, innovation, ideas and solutions – are an asset for the global labour force, Mr. Guterres emphasized.

We want to make sure that all young people, in and beyond Africa, have decent work and can fulfil their potential – *Secretary-General Guterres*

British Prime Minister Theresa May said that Africa “stands on the cusp of playing a transformative role in the global economy,” but the continent's potential will only be realized with greater investment in the next generation.

She noted that to keep pace with its growing population, Africa will need to create 18 million new jobs every year between now and 2035. And creating those jobs is not just important for Africa's future.

“In our interconnected world, where new jobs in Africa drive new markets, new trade and investment opportunities and greater global stability, these new jobs are important for everyone's future.”

“Africa's youth bulge does not need to be a problem for our continent nor for our neighbours. On the contrary, our young people are an asset and a driver of growth and innovation,” stated Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

“If we plan strategically and work together, we can instil a sense of hope in Africa's youth about the vast opportunities to be found right at home.”

Around 60 per cent of Ghana's population of 30 million people is under the age of 25, noted its President, Nana Akufo-Addo, adding that for most of the last decade, the growth of the country's economy has barely kept pace with population growth.

“Basically, we have an economy that is not generating jobs and not expanding,” said the President. “Youth unemployment is the greatest threat to the stability of our country and to our democracy. So finding solutions as to how to grow the Ghanaian economy so that it can produce jobs – that is the biggest single issue confronting our country.”

Canada's Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, added that educating young people and giving them opportunities in Africa is something that matters not just to the future of Africa but to the future of the world.

“The cost of missing out on our responsibility towards that will be astronomical if we do not give young people the tools, not just to shape their own future but to shape the future of their communities, their continent and of course the entire world.”

Denouncing US decision to pull out of nuclear deal, Iranian President says talks can resume, but threats and sanctions must end

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday strongly denounced the United States' decision to withdraw from the 2015 international nuclear deal and said President Donald Trump's actions to weaken or undercut global institutions showed total disregard for international order.

In a speech to the United Nations General Assembly's annual general debate, delivered hours after President Trump from the same podium accused his country of spreading "chaos, death and destruction" in the Middle East, Mr. Rouhani said it was unfortunate that international leaders trampled international law and encouraged extremist, racist and xenophobic tendencies, "not far from Nazism".

In particular, he said it preposterous that such leaders would be convening on Wednesday of a high-level meeting of the Security Council devoted to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The United States, "at least the current administration," seemed determined that international institutions will be paralyzed, Mr. Rouhani said. He lamented the recent withdrawal of the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), in defiance of international law and the obligations of Mr. Trump's predecessor.

The JCPOA – reached by Iran, China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the US and the European Union – sets out [rigorous mechanisms for monitoring](#) restrictions placed on Iran's nuclear programme, while paving the way for the lifting of UN sanctions against the country.

He praised, however, the "united and categorical" position of the international community vis-à-vis the US withdrawal and recalled that the Plan of Action had been unanimously endorsed by the Security Council in its [resolution 2231](#) (2015).

Iran had honored its commitments under this Plan of Action, as shown by 12 reports of the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)), while the United States has failed to respect their, under misleading motives, said Mr. Rouhani. He urged the UN to ensure that no State could evade the implementation of its international commitments, before denouncing US threats against countries implementing resolution 2231.

Denouncing US unilateral sanctions, the Iranian President said no nation could be forced to negotiate by force. There is nothing better than dialogue, as long as it takes place in both directions, he said.

“We invite you to return to the bargaining table that you have left. If you do not like this Plan of Action because it is the fruit of your political opponents, then come back to the resolution, return to international organizations, do not impose sanctions,” he said, adding that sanctions and extremism are two sides of the same coin.

The Iranian President said the two sides could still listen. “I’m starting the dialogue right here,” he said, stressing that the UN is not part of the US administration. “The dialogue can be resumed at the same point and by the same person who left the negotiating table”. This requires a cessation of threats, he said.

[At UN Assembly, Mexico says world headed back to isolationism, protectionist systems](#)

Addressing world leaders on the first day of United Nations General Assembly’s annual general debate, Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico, warned against isolationism and protectionism, and urged on UN Member States to counter the troubling trends by bolstering multilateralism.

Mr. Nieto expressed [concern](#) that the world is reversing trends and returning to systems counter to development, such as “the calling of exclusionary nationalisms, the return to protectionist trade policies and the questioning and the erosion of multilateralism.”

“These policies promote the political exclusion of minorities, the social exclusion of vulnerable groups, the economic exclusion of the dispossessed and the cultural exclusion of those who think differently,” he lamented, reaffirming Mexico’s support of multilateralism and international cooperation as “the best way to defend sovereignty and the dignity of every State.”

Mexico’s Head of State called for the abolition of discrimination, asking to end the “political exclusion of minorities, economic exclusion of the less favored and cultural exclusion of those who think differently.”

On peace and security, he noted that after more than two decades of absence, Mexico has resumed its participation in Peacekeeping Operations in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Repeatedly mentioning his support for nuclear disarmament, Mr. Nieto noted that Mexico initiated, supported and, in January, ratified the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), urging all Member States to sign and ratify it “without delay.”

He flagged that weapons of mass destruction are not the only threat to society calling illicit weapons trafficking “one of the greatest challenges to internal security.”

“Trafficking in illicit weapons, because of its gravity, is a scourge which we must deal with urgently,” he said, referring to the [Arms Trade Treaty](#) as “an important step forward.”

Noting that Mexico is one of the world’s most 10 populated countries, with the 15th largest economy, he called it “globally responsible” in pursuing “development that benefits all.”

Citing coordinated institutional architecture to promote the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, he told the Assembly: “The implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change is a priority of my country.”

Although Mexico “has acted responsibly in promoting human rights,” Mr. Nieto conceded that the country “is still facing major challenges” in this area, which is why it has implemented specific public policy and “remained opened to international scrutiny” as a means to strengthen its legal frameworks and “fully observe human rights.”

Moreover, he said that the international community must continue to promote respect for democratic principles throughout the world as part of our human rights efforts.

“The usurpation of powers, the systematic violation of political rights, the breakage of the democratic order and the humanitarian crisis taking place in some parts of the Americas is of grave concern to us,” he said, assuring the Assembly that Mexico would continue to “make its best diplomatic efforts” for democracy, peace and respect for human rights.

“Dialogue, cooperation and a rules-based system are our best options to achieve fair, shared, and lasting solutions to global challenges,” he stated.

[Full statement \(in Spanish\) available here](#)

[Jordan calls on UN Assembly to take ‘collective action’ over Middle East](#)

[crisis; Syria conflict](#)

King Abdullah II of Jordan told the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday that “challenges do not make collective action and mutual respect less important,” and spotlighted the need for all countries to “pull together to get [the Middle East] peace process back on track.”

“We have a long way to go to deliver global opportunity and hope, but we can’t simply give up because the task is hard. All our countries benefit when we unite in common cause,” he told the Assembly’s annual general debate.

“Collective action is also vital when it comes to resolving other conflicts and crises that threaten our world. Jordan will continue to support all multilateral efforts to help Syria achieve a political solution, based on the Geneva process, and UN [Security Council resolution 2254](#) (2015), to safeguard the country’s unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and create the conditions for stability and rebuilding.”

Addressing the current situation of the Palestinians, King Abdullah appeals for a two-state solution and calls on the countries in the region to reflect on the alternatives of global inaction.

“There is no such thing as a unilateral agreement; it takes at least two parties to make an agreement. Helping the parties achieve that agreement, and work together to build a new future, deserves the strong, steady support of all our world.”

[Full statement available here](#)