

UN rights chief urges all States to outlaw discrimination against LGBTI people

20 September 2017 – While many governments are moving in the right direction, too many are falling short when it comes to protecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, the United Nations human rights chief said today, urging all States to outlaw discrimination against this community.

Speaking at a ministerial event during the General Assembly's high-level session, High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said that he understood that in many parts of the world this is a difficult topic to broach.

"When pressed, officials sometimes tell me their hands are tied: the public, they say, will never accept equality for LGBTI people. But surely this is back to front. If public opinion is hostile towards LGBTI people, that makes it all the more urgent for governments to act to protect them," he said.

Reports by his Office ([OHCHR](#)) frequently reveal "a landscape of brutal violence and widespread discrimination, fuelled by negative public attitudes and in many cases actively sanctioned by the State," the High Commissioner noted.

"We ask all governments to allow individuals to love whom they choose, to outlaw discrimination, tackle hate crimes and the bullying so frequent in schools, and to protect intersex children from harm – including by banning medically unnecessary surgery on intersex infants. The onus has to be on governments to protect and respect rights – and explain to the public why these measures are needed," he added.

While gay and lesbian people – and to a lesser extent trans people – have seen huge gains over the past 20 years, many of those gains are fragile and face backlash, stated High Commissioner Zeid.

"As always, when rights are rolled back, it's minorities that are most exposed – immigrants, religious minorities, racial minorities and, of course, lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex people. Invariably, those who lose the most are those who have the least to begin with – the least power, money and public support," he said.

He stressed that governments alone cannot end discrimination and called on all – the media, schools, faith leaders, the business community – to stand up for the human rights of LGBTI people.

Next week the High Commissioner will be launching a new set of global standards, developed by his Office, which highlight the actions that

businesses can and should take to end discrimination against LGBTI people, in the workplace and beyond.

“We must push forward and overcome the obstacles to equality – in workplaces, schools, the law-courts and the streets. The time for justice is now.”