

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.

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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.