



International Service for
Human Rights



PRESS RELEASE

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NGOs FROM AROUND THE WORLD CELEBRATE HISTORIC UN STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

NGOs from around the world welcomed a **landmark statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity**, delivered last Friday at the United Nations Human Rights Council by **Norway on behalf of 54 States**.

The statement condemns human rights violations directed against people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, commends the work of UN mechanisms and civil society in this area, calls on UN Special Procedures and treaty bodies to address these issues, and urges the Human Rights Council to pay due attention to human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, including consideration at an upcoming session.

"This is the **largest-ever statement** delivered at the UN on sexual orientation issues, and the **first ever** to explicitly highlight human rights violations based on **gender identity**," said **John Fisher, Co-Director of ARC International**. "We are encouraged by the **measurable increase** in cross-regional support for sexual orientation and gender identity issues in recent years. The time has come to ensure that human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity receive the international scrutiny and condemnation they demand."

"Numerous Special Procedures have documented violations of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons," said **Chris Sidoti, Director of the International Service for Human Rights**. "These violations include use of the death penalty, torture, criminal sanctions, police harassment, violence, rape, beatings, disappearances, denials of freedom of expression, raids and closures of NGOs, and discrimination in education, employment, health and housing. Too often in the past, these human rights abuses have passed in silence. **Now, the era of invisibility is over.**"

Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, Co-Secretary General of the **International Lesbian and Gay Association** highlighted the fact that **more than 460 NGOs from 69 different countries** had joined together to **commend Norway for its leadership** and support the statement. "Activists from around the world often work on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity at risk of their jobs, their freedom, even their lives. The Norwegian statement has united States and NGOs from around the world to send a clear message that **human rights violations directed against our communities can no longer be ignored.**"

Earlier this year, **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour** in a keynote speech to an International Conference on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights noted that "violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons is frequently unreported, undocumented and goes ultimately unpunished. ... This **shameful silence** is the ultimate rejection of the fundamental principle of universality of rights. ... Excluding LGBT individuals from these protections **clearly violates international human rights law** as well as the common standards of humanity that define us all."

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Attached:

- Norwegian statement on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights;
- NGO joint statement on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights.