

**MY BODY**

**MY RIGHTS**

**SPRING 2017**

**AMNESTY**  
INTERNATIONAL



**Dear Human Rights Activist,**

Thank you for your interest in sexual and reproductive rights! If you're new to Amnesty International USA's work around sexual and reproductive rights, we welcome you to the team and we look forward to working with you and supporting your efforts! If you've been engaged and active in this work already, we really appreciate all that you do—you are the true leaders behind this.

At the heart of our sexual and reproductive rights work is the idea that **we all have the right to make decisions about our own health, body, sexuality, and reproductive life.**

Three years ago, Amnesty International launched My Body My Rights (MBMR), a Global Campaign focused on decriminalizing abortion, repealing discriminatory laws, and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services around the world. You can find out more about our work on that campaign at [www.amnestyusa.org/mbmr](http://www.amnestyusa.org/mbmr).

While MBMR is no longer a global priority campaign, **our work on sexual and reproductive rights is as important as ever** as communities across the US face increased attacks on and barriers to accessing their sexual and reproductive rights.

We continue to work with partners in the US to help prevent rollbacks of sexual and reproductive rights and to ensure equal access to information and services. Pushing AIUSA's work forward at the community level are our **Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocate Trainers**, who facilitate conversations and participatory workshops across the US to help shift to dialogue around SRR in the US (learn more about this in the toolkit!).

**In this toolkit you'll find:**

- information about sexual and reproductive rights and what's happening in the US;
- info on the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocate Trainers and how to connect with them;
- and ideas for action to promote sexual and reproductive rights in your own community.

**It is your life, your health, your body, your sexuality, your identity, and your reproductive life!** Together we can defend all of our rights to live free from fear, coercion, violence, or discrimination.

Together, we can ensure all people enjoy their basic rights!

In solidarity,

**Kaitlyn Denzler**

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# SOME BASICS ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

**We all have the right to make decisions about our own health, body, sexuality and reproductive life, without fear, coercion, violence or discrimination.** But all over the world, people's freedom to make these decisions is often controlled by the state, medical professionals, and even their own families. Criminal law and punitive sanctions are frequently used to control such choices. In the end, many people are prevented from making any choice at all.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (SRR) MEANS YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Make decisions about your own health, body, sexuality, and identity without fear, coercion, criminalization, or discrimination.
- Access sexual and reproductive related health services, including contraception. Nobody should be deprived of health care information on the basis of who they are or what they can afford.
- Access safe abortion services at a minimum in cases of rape, incest, when the life or health of the pregnant person is at risk, or when there is severe or fatal fetal impairment. And where legal, have equal access to safe abortion services.
- Have access to fact-based, comprehensive sex education.
- Decide if you want to have children, when you want have them, and how many.
- Choose your intimate partner and if you want to marry and when.
- Live free from violence, including rape and other sexual violence (e.g. female genital mutilation/cutting, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization and forced marriage).
- Live free from discrimination based on your sex, gender, sexuality, or perceived identity.

## LET'S GET NERDY! Where are SRR guarantees in International Law?

### INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS, COVENANTS, DECLARATIONS, & TREATIES

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

### REGIONAL DOCUMENTS

- American Convention on Human Rights
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention on Belem do Para)
- European Convention on Human Rights
- Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)
- African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Banjul Charter)
- Protocol Additional to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in the Rights of Women in Africa (African Women's Protocol)
- Arab Charter on Human Rights

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE UNITED STATES?

**The United States is failing to uphold its sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) obligations.** With, for example, increased hostility towards SRR and family planning services across the country, as well as a number of state-level discriminatory bills against LGBT communities, **it's not difficult to notice how the US can and must do better.**

We ALL have the right to make decisions about our own health, body, sexuality, and reproductive life. However, **many of these rights are being challenged, restricted, taken away, or not fulfilled across the US.**

This section will also help you and your group identify how and where you might like to engage in this work, and will hopefully inspire you to take action in your communities (see pages 5-6 for some more guidance around this and always feel free to reach out to me at [kdenzler@aiusa.org](mailto:kdenzler@aiusa.org)).

## Here are just **SOME** examples of SRR nonfulfillment in the US:

- **Congress is attempting to eliminate Title X** (federal grant responsible for providing comprehensive family planning and health services), **defund Planned Parenthood** (which helps to provide crucial and preventive SRR health services), and **repeal the Affordable Care Act** (which requires that FDA approved contraceptive methods must be covered by insurance in addition to other expanded health coverage). The Trump administration supports and champions all of these efforts.
- NARAL Pro-choice America has rated the **state of reproductive-health-care access in the US as “restricted access”** on a spectrum of “total access” to “severely restricted access” (check out their report—link below—for all the details)
- **The US continues to withhold federal funding for abortion access** both domestically and internationally through the Hyde and Helms Amendments. The Trump Administration expanded the Global Gag Rule to prohibit U.S. international aid to groups that so much as educate their communities on safe abortion. Even if an organization is using non-U.S. funding for such activities, they will lose their U.S. funding if they offer counseling, advocate for legal reform, provide abortions, or even provide referrals at any time.
- **In 2016 alone, 56 states had enacted anti-access restrictions** such as—but not limited to—abortion bans, counseling and referral bans, and TRAP (Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers) laws. 20-week abortion bans have already been enacted in 19 states.
- **Sexual education in the US is often inaccurate and biased, and sometimes not required at all.** Sex education in general is only mandated in 24 states. When sex education is provided, it only has to be medically accurate in 13 states, culturally appropriate and unbiased in 8, and cannot promote religious ideals in 2.
- **26 states require that educators stress abstinence as prevention**, despite that studies have consistently shown that abstinence is not an effective education strategy. **The topic of sexual orientation is only required in 13 states; and in 4 out of those 13, only negative information is required.**
- **Indigenous women** still cannot access basic post-rape care.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE U.S. CONTINUED...

- Across the country, there are numerous **bills and proposed legislation that discriminate against LGBT people in every aspect of their lives.** Since 2015, 21 states have passed Religious Freedom Restoration Acts (RFRAs) which are being used to discriminate against LGBT people (and to restrict SRR in general) and 30 states have proposed legislation that specifically targets trans people (see AIUSA's toolkit on RFRAs [www.amnestyusa.org/lgbt](http://www.amnestyusa.org/lgbt) )
- **There are huge racial and class disparities in access to SRR information and services** — women of color, for example, are much less likely to receive regular Pap smears, which is a crucial screening process for cervical cancer. Black women are dying at nearly 4 times the rate of white women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the year immediately following childbirth.
- **Sexual assault on college campuses against individuals of all genders and sexual orientation are often inadequately addressed and/or ignore altogether.** Among undergraduate students, approximately 1 in 5 women, 1 in 19 men, and 1 in 4 LGBT individuals will experience sexual assault during their time in college. Most assaults go unreported.
- **Rape culture and “victim” blaming is pervasive throughout the US** and creates an environment that disregards survivors and their rights to safety, dignity, and justice.

## HERE ARE SOME MORE PLACES TO GET RESOURCES, STATS, OR GET INVOLVED:

### For more resources:

**Advocates for Youth**—[www.advocatesforyouth.org](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org)  
**In Our Own Voice**—[www.blackrj.org](http://www.blackrj.org)  
**Population Institute Report Cards**—  
[www.populationinstitute.org/resources/reports/reportcard](http://www.populationinstitute.org/resources/reports/reportcard)  
**National Sexual Violence Resource Center**—  
[www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)  
**NARAL Pro-Choice America**—  
[www.prochoiceamerica.org/government-and-you/who-decides](http://www.prochoiceamerica.org/government-and-you/who-decides)

### For more info, stats, and research:

**Center for Reproductive Rights**—  
[www.reproductiverights.org](http://www.reproductiverights.org)  
**Guttmacher Institute**—[www.guttmacher.org](http://www.guttmacher.org)

### For more ways to get involved:

**Campus Pride**—<https://www.campuspride.org>  
**National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health**—  
[www.latinainstitute.org](http://www.latinainstitute.org)  
**National Network of Abortion Funds**—  
[abortionfunds.org](http://abortionfunds.org)  
**Planned Parenthood**—[www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)  
**Strong Families**—[www.strongfamiliesmovement.org](http://www.strongfamiliesmovement.org)  
**Trust Black Women**—[www.trustblackwomen.org](http://www.trustblackwomen.org)  
**Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity**—

### For legal support, hotlines, and more:

**GLAD (GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders)**— <http://www.glad.org>  
**National Domestic Violence Hotline**—  
[www.thehotline.org/help](http://www.thehotline.org/help)  
**Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network**—  
[www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

# TALKING ABOUT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Have you ever had awkward conversations with your family (or anyone!) about sex or had a difficult and/or frustrating time accessing information or sexual health services such as contraception? Have you felt like you had to explain your gender identity to your friends or even to complete strangers? Have you felt like you had to justify or defend your gender expression/presentation? Have you felt frustrated or constrained by the binary gender norms that society forces upon us? Have you felt uncomfortable or experienced backlash for breaking or dismantling gender norms?

Sexual and reproductive rights can be immensely personal, and also controversial. For many people, sexuality and gender are spaces of strong emotional connections and firmly held beliefs. The act of questioning our assumptions or challenging those of others can feel dangerous and exhausting while still being exhilarating and inspiring (and you may not want to stop the conversation!).

## START THE CONVERSATION WITH AN AIUSA SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ADVOCATE TRAINER!

**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (SRR) ADVOCATE TRAINERS** are human rights advocates who volunteer with AIUSA to facilitate participatory SRR human rights education activities/workshops in their states and/or regions. SRR Advocate Trainers can work with your groups to start or continue participatory discussions around sexual and reproductive rights. They can start with SRR 101 and/or move your group into how to mobilize around SRR in your communities. The SRR workshops lead to empowering conversations, where everyone learns from each other and walks away with knowledge and skills to lead campaigns, activism, and advocacy for their sexual and reproductive rights.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW TO WORK WITH THE SRR ADVOCATE TRAINERS ON THE NEXT PAGE!**

**MY LIFE  
MY HEALTH  
MY EDUCATION  
MY CHOICE  
MY BODY  
MY RIGHTS**



# WORKING WITH SRR ADVOCATE TRAINERS AND OTHER IDEAS FOR ACTION

If you want to partner and work with SRR Advocate Trainer(s), you can reach out directly to Kaitlyn ([kdenzler@aiusa.org](mailto:kdenzler@aiusa.org)) and cc' your Field Organizer (find your field organizer here: <http://bit.ly/1IG7Ned>) and we'll get you connected to a trainer in your region.

**The way you partner with the SRR Advocate Trainer can vary and will depend on what your group decides.** You could, for example, partner with the SRR Advocate Trainer(s) for just one, 3-hour participatory workshop that is tailored for your group. Or you could form a longer-term partnership with them and have the trainer(s) come to you and work through various activities throughout a semester or academic year for a more holistic learning process. **It's completely up to you and what works for your group/community!**

The SRR Advocate Trainers will be working from Amnesty's human rights education module, Respect My Rights, Respect My Dignity—Sexual and Reproductive Rights Are Human Rights (you can find this online), and everything can be modified to fit your needs. **They're really excited to partner with you, so don't forget to reach out!**

## OTHER IDEAS FOR ACTION!

1. Email Kaitlyn at [kdenzler@aiusa.org](mailto:kdenzler@aiusa.org) to get involved in our sexual and reproductive rights work, and to receive updates on toolkits, actions, etc. If you're planning an activity/event reach out to get materials.
2. **Connect with a Sexual and Reproductive Rights Advocate Trainer (see above and below)! Work with a trainer(s) in your region to host a participatory workshop/discussion with your group and/or invite other groups on campus to attend.**
3. Partner with other groups on campus or local groups to host an event like a film screening and short discussion —> E.g. concerned about sexual assault on campus? Host a screening of the documentary, *The Hunting Ground*. Check out the one-pager on campus sexual assault at [www.amnestyusa.org/mbmr](http://www.amnestyusa.org/mbmr)
4. **Table at farmers' markets, fairs, festivals, on campus — reach out to more people and get them involved in your sexual and reproductive rights activities.**
5. Write a letter to your editor in your local newspaper about why protecting sexual and reproductive rights is important to you and/or your group and highlight a specific piece of legislation you're worried about (or a positive piece of legislation too). These are really impactful.
6. **If there's a piece of harmful legislation mobilize your group to call your elected officials (202-224-3121) or have a letter writing event. If you have questions about this reach out to Kaitlyn and your Legislative Coordinator (email [grassroots@aiusa.org](mailto:grassroots@aiusa.org)) to get connected).**



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