

Protect LGBTI Rights Globally

SUMMER 2019

A Time of Crisis

Despite positive advancements regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) rights around the world, LGBTI peoples still face violence, hatred, bigotry, and discrimination in an overwhelming majority of countries. Same-sex relationships remain criminalized in 70 countries and are punishable by death in eleven countries. LGBTI people experience capricious imprisonment; loss of employment, housing, and access to health care; restriction on their freedom of assembly, press, and speech; and societal stigma and discrimination. Human Rights organizations, governments, and international bodies have documented hostility toward LGBTI people in every region of the world.

Examples in 2019 alone point to the dangers LGBTI people face across the world. In January, authorities in the Russian Republic of Chechnya launched another wave of violence against people perceived to be gay or lesbian, adding to the number of LGBTI people arrested, tortured, and killed in 2017. In April, Brunei implemented extreme penal codes that included death by stoning for same-sex sexual activities, and while after immense international pressure the government has said it will not enforce the death penalty, same-sex sexual activities remain criminalized. In May, Turkish police used extreme violence to break up a pride march and a total ban on any “pride-related” gatherings remains in place, and the Kenya high court upheld colonial penal code criminalizing same-sex activity.

Amnesty International USA recommends that Congress pass the International Human Rights Defense Act (H.R. 1857) and the GLOBE Act (reintroduction pending).

The International Human Rights Defense Act of 2019 (H.R. 1857), reintroduced to the House on March 25, 2019, would build a framework into U.S. diplomacy to protect LGBTI rights worldwide. The bill would make preventing and responding to discrimination and violence against the LGBTI community a foreign policy priority.

Additionally, this legislation would require the State Department to:

- Devise a global strategy to address discrimination against the LGBTI community.
- Permanently establish a Special Envoy for Human Rights of LGBTI Peoples in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL).
- Coordinate with local advocacy groups, governments, multilateral organizations, and the private sector to promote international LGBTQ human rights.

The GLOBE Act was originally introduced to the House in December 2018 and is currently seeking original cosponsors for reintroduction (contact erica.riordan@mail.house.gov). The bill aims to set a broad roadmap to reclaim U.S. global leadership in support of LGBTI communities through U.S. human rights and development programs and includes the provisions of the International Human Rights Defense Act (H.R. 1857) above.

Additionally, this legislation would:

- Codify the recording of anti-LGBTI abuses in the State Department’s annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.
- Codify LGBTI people as a group eligible for asylum and refugee determinations under the Immigration & Nationality Act.
- Require the President to submit to Congress a list of foreign individuals responsible for or complicit in anti-LGBTI human rights abuses. Individuals on the list would be ineligible for U.S. visas, making them ineligible for entry to the United States and subject to removal.

Amnesty International is a global movement with 7 million supporters worldwide campaigning to promote and defend human rights. For additional information, contact Tarah Demant at TDemant@aiusa.org.

