

Research report

Forum: United Nations Human Rights Council
Issue: Tackling state-imposed discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ communities
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Position: Deputy Chair



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Introducing your chairs

Hii! My name is Lotus, and I have the honor of being your Deputy Chair for UNHRC at LmunA '25 and I'm beyond excited to be working alongside my amazing friend Kate, your Main Chair!

I'm currently in my 5th year of VWO at Farel College in Amersfoort, and this will actually be my 7th MUN conference. I joined my very first MUN when I was just 12 years old, and since then I've fulfilled just about every role possible; from delegate to organizing committee and this will be my second time chairing!





Outside of school, there's a good chance you'll find me on the soccer field, at the gym, or doing pretty much. Your chairs(: any sport I can get my hands on. I also love making music, I recently started learning guitar and piano (still very much a beginner, so don't expect a concert... yet), and I used to sing in a band!

I can't wait to meet all of you, hear your ideas, and make LmunA '25 a conference we'll all remember!

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An introduction to the topic

“Tackling state-imposed discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ communities”

In today’s world, millions of LGBTQ+ individuals, whether open about their identity or not, face vastly different realities depending on where they live. Over the years, many countries have made significant progress, fostering societies where being part of the LGBTQ+ community is widely accepted. However, for many individuals, this is far from reality.

In more than 60 countries, same-sex relationships remain criminalized, and in several nations the death penalty is still a possible punishment. Such laws, policies, and actions imposed by governments restrict fundamental rights, limit freedoms, and put lives in danger.

These measures contribute to numerous underlying problems, including forced migration and asylum-seeking, increased vulnerability to violence and hate crimes, and restricted access to healthcare, education, and employment, all of which have deep societal consequences.

State-imposed discrimination fuels societal stigma, legitimizes violence, and, most importantly, undermines the basic human rights that should be guaranteed to all individuals.

Definition of key terms

LGBTQ+

Acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, plus other sexual and gender identities.

State-imposed discrimination

Unequal treatment enforced by government laws, policies, or actions.

Criminalization of same-sex relationships

Laws that make consensual same-sex acts illegal.

Conversion therapy

Discredited practices aimed at changing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

A 1948 UN document affirming equality and dignity for all people.

General overview

LGBTQ+ Communities

The term “LGBTQ+ communities” refers to diverse groups of people united by non-heteronormative sexual orientations and/or gender identities. These communities are not homogeneous, experiences differ based on factors like race, religion, class, and geography.

In countries with strong legal protections, LGBTQ+ communities often have active civil society networks, Pride events, and public advocacy. In repressive states, these communities may operate underground, connecting through encrypted apps or informal networks to avoid detection.

Globally, these communities face a paradox: visibility has brought legal progress in some areas, but in others it has led to harsher backlash from states seeking to suppress perceived “Western” influence.

State imposed violence

State-imposed violence against LGBTQ+ people takes many forms, ranging from physical harm inflicted by security forces to the indirect harm of legal systems that criminalize identities and behaviours. Examples include:

- **Arbitrary arrests and detentions** under “morality” or “public decency” laws.
- **Police brutality**, such as raids on LGBTQ+ gathering places.
- **Torture or ill-treatment** in detention facilities, often aimed at extracting “confessions” or forcing “conversion.”

- **Judicial punishments**, including flogging, imprisonment, or even the death penalty for consensual same-sex relations.

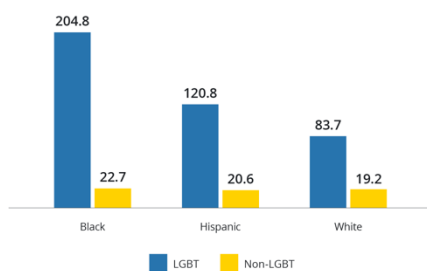
This violence is not always overtly physical. It can also be systemic, for example, forcing LGBTQ+ individuals into psychiatric institutions, stripping them of parental rights, or denying them legal recognition of their gender identity. In many countries, the absence of protective laws is itself a form of state-enabled violence, as it leaves individuals vulnerable to hate crimes without legal recourse.

Impact of discrimination

Social impact

State-imposed violence against LGBTQ+ individuals deeply harms their well-being. In countries where sexual orientation or gender identity is restricted, rates of social isolation, family rejection, and bullying are significantly higher. Research shows that LGBTQ+ youth who face family rejection are over eight times more likely to attempt suicide than those from accepting families. Around 70% report being bullied at school, and many skip classes or drop out entirely due to feeling unsafe. The mental

Figure 1. Disparities in violent victimization by sexual and gender minority (LGBT) status and race/ethnicity (rates per 1,000)



health consequences are severe, in some surveys, nearly one in five LGBTQ+ youth report attempting suicide in the past year. When governments use anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric, they legitimise hate speech and violence from private citizens, reinforcing a cycle of fear, stigma, and exclusion.

Economic impact

State-imposed discrimination also carries heavy economic costs. By limiting access to jobs, housing, and healthcare, governments reduce the earning potential of LGBTQ+ individuals and hinder their full participation in the economy. Countries that exclude LGBTQ+ workers lose out on both productivity and foreign investment, with studies showing that legal discrimination can cut GDP by billions each year. In addition, LGBTQ+ tourism and international business are more likely to avoid nations with poor human rights records, further reinforcing economic isolation.

Global impact

On a global scale, persecution forces many LGBTQ+ individuals to seek asylum in safer countries, creating migration pressures on neighbouring states. International organizations may respond with sanctions or attach human rights conditions to aid, directly influencing a country's foreign relations. Widespread violations also damage

a state's credibility in global governance forums such as the UN, limiting its diplomatic influence and standing in the international community.

Geopolitical shifts

In recent years, the global landscape on LGBTQ+ rights has grown increasingly polarized:

- **Progressive shifts:** Many Western and Latin American nations have legalized same-sex marriage, expanded anti-discrimination protections, and recognized transgender rights.
- **Regressive shifts:** Some states, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, have tightened restrictions, citing cultural sovereignty or religious values.
- **Influence battles:** LGBTQ+ rights have become a geopolitical talking point, some governments frame them as part of a Western liberal agenda, while others promote them as core to universal human rights.

These shifts often align with broader political currents, such as authoritarianism versus liberal democracy, and can influence alliances, aid flows, and diplomatic negotiations.

Conclusion

State-imposed discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people is a complex and deeply entrenched issue. It is driven by a mix of historical legacies, cultural beliefs, political opportunism, and geopolitical positioning. While progress is evident in some regions, regression in others shows that rights are neither inevitable nor irreversible. Understanding the social, economic, and geopolitical dimensions of the issue is essential for crafting solutions that are both effective and sustainable.

Major parties involved

Countries with harsh anti-LGBTQ+ laws

Uganda

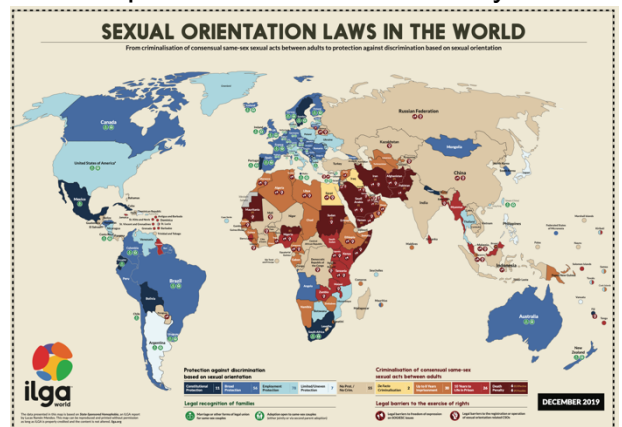
Adopted one of the world's harshest anti-LGBTQ+ laws in 2023, including life imprisonment and potential death penalty.

Iran

Same-sex relations are criminalized and punishable by death under Sharia law. The government enforces strict laws against LGBTQ+ individuals, leading to arrests, imprisonment, and executions. Social stigma and state repression make it extremely dangerous to live openly as LGBTQ+.

Saudi Arabia

Enforces the death penalty for same-sex relations and imposes severe restrictions on LGBTQ+ expression. The state uses religious laws to justify harsh punishments, and LGBTQ+ people face high risks of violence, arrest, and discrimination.



Russia

Expanded its "anti-propaganda" law to ban any public discussion or positive portrayal of LGBTQ+ identities.

Nigeria

Criminalizes same-sex marriage and relationships with penalties up to 14 years in prison. Recent laws have increased punishments and limited freedom of expression and assembly for LGBTQ+ individuals, worsening social hostility and legal discrimination.

Pakistan

Criminalizes same-sex relations under colonial-era laws; widespread social persecution.

Qatar

Same-sex relations are illegal and punishable by imprisonment or fines. During high-profile events like the 2022 FIFA World Cup, authorities arrested and targeted LGBTQ+ individuals. The legal and social environment remains hostile and unsafe for LGBTQ+ people.

Egypt

While same-sex acts are not explicitly illegal, vague laws on morality and public decency are frequently used to arrest and harass LGBTQ+ individuals. Police raids, arbitrary detention, and societal discrimination contribute to widespread fear and marginalization.

International and non-governmental organizations

United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

Addresses human rights violations and promotes equality.

Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Supports LGBTQ+ asylum seekers fleeing persecution.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

An NGO that monitors and reports on global human rights abuses, including discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ communities.

Amnesty International

Advocates against criminalization and violence towards LGBTQ+ people.

ILGA World

International LGBTQ+ rights NGO publishing annual legal status reports.

OutRight International

A global LGBTQ+ human rights organization that documents violations, provides research and firsthand accounts of abuses, and advocates for legal and policy changes at the United Nations and other international forums. They work closely with grassroots groups worldwide to amplify the voices of LGBTQ+ people facing persecution and discrimination.

Timeline of keyevents

- 1948** The UDHR established the foundation for global human rights, affirming that all people are equal and entitled to basic rights and freedoms. While it did not explicitly mention sexual orientation, it laid the groundwork for later LGBTQ+ rights protections.
- 1969** Stonewall Riots in New York City spark the modern global LGBTQ+ rights movement.
- 1977** First UN resolution on human rights and sexual orientation proposed (not adopted).
- 1994** Toonen v. Australia ruling by the UN Human Rights Committee declares that criminalizing same-sex relations violates human rights.
- 2001** Netherlands becomes the first country to legalize same-sex marriage.
- 2006** Yogyakarta Principles adopted, outlining human rights standards for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- 2011** UN Human Rights Council passes its first resolution condemning violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 2015** The US Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage nationwide (Obergefell v. Hodges).
- 2016** UN Secretary-General issues a report urging protection of LGBTQ+ rights globally.
- 2017** India's Supreme Court decriminalizes consensual same-sex relations.
- 2018** UN launches free & equal campaign to promote LGBTQ+ equality. The UN started this campaign to raise awareness and promote equal rights for LGBTQ+ people worldwide, aiming to combat discrimination through education and advocacy.
- 2020s** Increased backlash in some countries with new anti-LGBTQ+ laws and crackdowns (e.g., Russia, Uganda).
- 2023** Uganda enacted one of the world's toughest anti-LGBTQ+ laws, imposing life imprisonment and even the death penalty, which led to widespread international condemnation.

Same-sex marriage is legal in nearly 40 places around the world

Jurisdictions that allow same-sex couples to marry



Note: Current to June 2, 2025.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of government sources and international news articles.

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Previous attempts to solve the issue

The United Nations has made several efforts to address violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ communities. For example, the UN Human Rights Council passed its first resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity in 2011, signaling international recognition of LGBTQ+ rights. Campaigns like **UN Free & Equal** have promoted awareness and equality, aiming to shift public opinion worldwide.

International bodies such as the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** and NGOs like **Human Rights Watch** monitor abuses and urge governments to change discriminatory laws. Despite these initiatives, progress has been limited in many regions due to strong political and cultural resistance. Some governments openly reject international pressure, framing LGBTQ+ rights as foreign interference or against local values.

Moreover, past actions often failed to involve local communities or tackle underlying social stigma, which means even where laws changed, social acceptance lagged behind. Without addressing societal attitudes, legal reforms alone struggled to reduce violence or discrimination in practice.

Possible solutions

To effectively tackle these issues, delegates should focus on dismantling discriminatory laws and building legal protections that safeguard LGBTQ+ individuals from violence and discrimination. Equally important is investing in education and awareness campaigns to change social attitudes and reduce stigma.

Another key area is supporting safe migration and asylum pathways for those fleeing persecution. International cooperation and funding for grassroots LGBTQ+ organizations can help drive local change, balancing respect for cultural differences with universal human rights standards.

By combining legal reform with social progress and international support, the global community can create a safer and more inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ people worldwide.

Further reading

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Examines discrimination against transgender individuals in the labor market.

📺 **Delhommer, S., & Vamossy, D. F. (2024).** *Effect of state and local sexual orientation anti-discrimination laws on labor market differentials.* <https://arxiv.org/abs/2404.03794>
Analyzes how anti-discrimination laws affect economic opportunities for LGBTQ+ people.

📺 **Human Rights Campaign (2024).** *The Epidemic of Violence Against the Transgender & Gender-Expansive Community in the U.S.* <https://reports.hrc.org/an-epidemic-of-violence-2024>
Details rates and impact of violence against transgender people in the U.S.

📺 **International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA, 2024).** *Laws on us: Global report on LGBTI human rights.* <https://ilga.org/news/laws-on-us-2024-lgbti-human-rights>
Overviews laws worldwide that protect or restrict LGBTQ+ rights.

📺 **United Nations.** *LGBTIQ+ People.* <https://www.un.org/en/lgbtiq-people>
Shows the UN's efforts to protect LGBTQ+ rights and fight discrimination globally.

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