



Homophobia still tolerated by governments around the world

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Governments around the world are failing to live up to their obligations to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people, Amnesty International said on the eve of the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia.

"Ahead of a season of Pride events, governments across the globe need to step up and fulfil their responsibility to allow people to express themselves, protected from homophobic violence," said Michael Bochenek, Amnesty International's Senior Director for Law and Policy.

"Recent Pride marches have been blighted by bans and violent attacks - this cannot continue. Discrimination and restrictions on the rights to freedom of assembly and expression plague the lives of LGBTI people all over the world."

In a number of countries there is a marked lack of will to tackle homophobia and transphobia. The authorities in some countries even go so far as to encourage it by introducing and implementing legislation and regulations that undermine the rights of LGBTI people to freely express themselves - in contravention of states' international obligations.

LGBTI people are frequently targeted with violence during Pride events as well as in their everyday lives. Far too often attacks are not investigated thoroughly or promptly by the police.

"It's outrageous that in 2014 authorities around the world are failing to legislate against or investigate homophobic and transphobic hate crimes. Even more grating is the fact that in many countries LGBTI people are themselves the target of criminal charges and state violence," said Michael Bochenek.

"Everyone should be able to enjoy all their human rights without discrimination, including on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity."

This year Amnesty International is focusing attention on a number of countries where change is urgently needed.

Cameroon: Violence, arbitrary arrest and detention because of real or perceived sexual orientation are commonplace. Cameroon's penal code criminalizes same-sex sexual acts and the offence is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment.

Haiti: Attitudes to LGBTI people have become increasingly hostile since the 12 January 2010 earthquake, when a number of religious groups providing aid to Haiti claimed homosexuality had led to the natural disaster. In November 2013 men armed with machetes and handguns beat up two members of an LGBTI rights group at their office in Port-au-Prince.

Russia: A 2013 act has outlawed public LGBTI events. Several peaceful assemblies have been disrupted by the authorities on the basis of this homophobic law. Police routinely fail to protect LGBTI individuals from violent attacks.

Serbia: A Pride event planned for 31 May is at risk of a last minute ban. Since 2011 public authorities have banned Pride marches on the basis of threats from homophobic groups. A march in 2010 was overshadowed by 6,500 angry counter-demonstrators.

Uganda: On 23 February the President signed into law an Anti-Homosexuality bill which stipulates a life sentence for same-sex relations, and allows for the extradition of Ugandans having same-sex relations abroad. Violent attacks, arbitrary arrests and torture and other ill-treatment of LGBTI people continues with alarming frequency.

Ukraine: After being banned from the city centre, the first Kyiv Pride was held last year in an isolated location. Counter-demonstrators still tried to disrupt it, throwing firecrackers and tearing down banners. Organisers of the 2014 Pride on 5-7 July have received threats of violence, while the government refuses to legislate against discriminating towards LGBTI people.

Since the 1970s, Pride marches have been crucial for LGBTI people to mobilize against homophobia and transphobia, to stand against discrimination, to build bridges with mainstream society and to send a clear message to the authorities that they have a responsibility to ensure the rights of all people.

"All too often authorities try to wriggle out from their responsibility to ensure the right of LGBTI people to hold events, to be visible, to be integrated into mainstream society. As Pride marches are being organized across the globe, now is the time for governments to stand firm and guarantee these basic rights," said Michael Bochenek.

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