
CHAPTER 17:
ADVANCING GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS



ADVANCING GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

As a member of the Council for Global Equality, NCTE works with the Council to ensure that the United States uses its diplomatic, political, and economic influence to promote human rights and oppose human rights abuses that are too often directed at individuals because of their gender identity or sexual orientation. The US has played an important role in advancing the human rights of LGBT people in the United Nations as well as in bilateral and regional relations, and in 2015 established a Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons. However, much more can be done to deeply integrate human rights, including the rights of LGBT persons, into all aspects of US foreign policy.

Policy Advances

- The State Department established a US Special Envoy for the Human Rights of LGBT Persons. (2015)
- The US joined a group of 25 nations in a historic joint statement of commitment to advance human rights and promote inclusive development for LGBT and intersex persons through increased cooperation. (2014)
- The US Agency for International Development announced the LGBT Vision for Action, outlining agency priorities and actions to date to support LGBT-inclusive international development work. (2014)
- The United Nations (UN) launched its global “Free and Equal” public education campaign for LGBT human rights. (2013)
- President Obama issued a memorandum directing all federal agencies to take action on LGBT human rights abroad. (2011)
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a historic report finding a pattern of human rights violations against LGBT people. (2011)
- The State Department launched the Global Equality Fund to support LGBT human rights activists around the world. (2011)
- The State Department began including LGBT people in annual human rights country reports. (2010)

Needed Policy Changes

- All federal agencies working abroad should continue to assertively implement the December 2011 Presidential Memorandum to promote and protect the human rights of LGBT people in U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance work, including through law enforcement training programs and direct support for transgender and LGBT organizations.
- The Department of State should require automatic policy reviews whenever a foreign country enacts new anti-LGBT policies, such as the review undertaken following passage of Uganda’s repressive anti-gay law in 2013.
- The Department of State, US Agency of International Development, and other agencies should require government contractors and grantees globally adopt LGBT-inclusive nondiscrimination policies.*
- The Department of State should engage in a vigorous and concerted effort to use people-to-people exchanges and speaker programs to advance understanding of transgender rights as human rights.
- The U.S. Trade Representative should ensure that the human rights safeguard clause in any prospective bilateral or regional trade accord includes specific reference to transgender populations.

- The Department of Commerce should introduce transgender equality into the dialogue and work programs of American Chambers of Commerce abroad.
- The Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration should continue its work on enhancing protection of LGBT refugees and implement a transparent, meaningful system of expedited processing for the resettlement of refugees who face an imminent risk of danger in their countries of first asylum, in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security.
- The Office of Global Affairs should engage with the World Health Organization (WHO) to support appropriate revisions to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) to de-pathologize gender variance and reflect current medical science regarding gender identity.
- The Office of Global Affairs should engage with the World Health Organization (WHO) to pass a resolution recognizing global LGBT health disparities and calling for action to address them.

See Fighting HIV/AIDS for more on international HIV/AIDS policy.