



United Nations Human Rights Council: 35th Session (6th – 23rd June 2017)
Item 3: General Debate
12th-13th June 2017
Speaker: Humanists UK representative, Chris Ward

Thank you, Mr President.

I give this statement on behalf of Humanists UK¹ and LGBT Humanists UK.

We welcome the most recent report² from the Independent Expert on the issue of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly the call for 'broad-based education, awareness-raising and action responsive to [these] issues'.³

We still see both ongoing and emerging human rights abuses against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) across the world. In Chechnya, over a hundred men suspected of being gay have been abducted, tortured, and some murdered⁴ whilst the government insists upon the non-existence of gay men.⁵ Abuses allegedly include daily beatings, electrocution and being forced to sit on bottles.⁶ According to Amnesty International, men released are often subject to 'honour killings' by a family member.⁷

In other parts of the world we also find the rights of LGBT+ individuals under increasing threat. The Trump administration has rescinded protections for transgender students to have access to bathrooms and locker rooms matching their gender identity,⁸ and the recently signed so-called 'religious liberty order' has been criticised as turning religious freedom into 'a weapon to discriminate against... LGBTQ people'.⁹ It is concerning that a nation which confirmed marriage equality as constitutional only in 2015 is taking backwards steps on its journey to full LGBT+ equality.¹⁰

¹ Humanists UK has recently renamed from the British Humanist Association (BHA). Humanists UK has changed its trading name but its legal name remains the British Humanist Association.

² A/HRC/35/36

³ A/HRC/35/36 66(h)

⁴ Protections against which are found in the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights respectively.

⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/stop-abducting-and-killing-gay-men-chechnya>

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<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/chechnya-gay-men-concentration-camps-torture-detain-nazi-ramzan-kadyrov-chechen-russia-region-a7677901.html>

⁷

http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/deadly-anti-lgbt-crisis-unfolding-chechnya-1616551?utm_campaign=/deadly-anti-lgbt-crisis-unfolding-chechnya-1616551

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/feb/22/transgender-students-bathroom-trump-obama>

⁹ <https://www.clergyunitedagainstdiscrimination.org/>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jun/26/gay-marriage-legal-supreme-court>



We call upon member states that have discriminatory laws and policies which cause or promote violence against LGBT+ people to remove such laws and instead introduce protections that amount to no less than full LGBT+ equality. We also call upon states to avoid retrograde steps away from LGBT+ equality. We also strongly encourage the Independent Expert on the issue of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity to investigate the role that socio-cultural norms play in the proliferation of human rights abuses committed against LGBT+ individuals across the globe.

Thank you.