

US refuses UN gay rights Declaration

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President Bush silent on decriminalisation of homosexuality worldwide
 France and the European Union lead without US support

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"It will be the first time in its history that the UN General Assembly has ever considered the issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) human rights," he said.

"Although not be binding on the member states, the declaration will have immense symbolic value, given the six decades in which homophobic persecution has been ignored by the UN.

For a summary of the countries supporting the Declaration, see below.

"Even today, not a single international human rights convention explicitly acknowledges the human rights of LGBT people. The right to physically love the person of one's choice is nowhere enshrined in any global humanitarian law. No convention recognises sexual rights as human rights. None offer explicit protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity," added Mr Tatchell.

"Eighty-six countries (nearly half the nations on Earth) still have a total ban on male homosexuality and a smaller number also ban sex between women. The penalties in these countries range from a few years jail to life imprisonment. In at least seven countries or regions of countries (all under Islamist jurisdiction), the sentence is death: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, Mauritania and parts of Nigeria and Pakistan:

See the global homophobia survey produced by the International Lesbian and Gay Association:

"Unsurprisingly, the Vatican and the Organisation of Islamic States are leading the fight against the UN declaration."

Last week, the Papal envoy to the UN, Monsignor Celestino Migliore, explained the "logic" of the Holy See's opposition when he announced the Vatican's rejection of this week's decriminalisation declaration, as reported in The Times newspaper in London:

The Monsignor argued that the UN declaration would unfairly "pillory" countries where homosexuality is illegal; forcing them to establish "new categories (gay people) protected from discrimination." Such laws would "create new and implacable acts of discrimination.... States where same-sex unions are not recognized as 'marriages,' for example, would be subject to international pressure."

"In other words, protecting LGBT people against discrimination is an act of discrimination against those who discriminate. Since the Vatican is against discrimination, it opposes discrimination against countries that discriminate. This is the mediaeval mindset of the Pope and his placemen," said Mr Tatchell.

"Never mind, there are already plenty of countries committed to supporting the UN decriminalisation declaration.

"It will be tabled in the General Assembly on Wednesday by France with the backing of all 27 member states of the European Union; plus non-EU European nations such as Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, Ukraine, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine, Armenia and Macedonia. Russia and Turkey are not

signing.

"The call for the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships also has the support of the Latin American states of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay - but not, notably, Columbia, Peru, Guyana or Venezuela.

"Only three African nations - Gabon, Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau - are endorsing the declaration so far. South Africa has not signed up. No Caribbean nation has offered its support - not even Cuba.

"Although New Zealand is committed to the declaration, Australia is not. Nor is the United States. But Canada is a sponsor.

"No country in the Middle East, apart from Israel, endorses the declaration, and in Asia only Japan has agreed to approve it. China and India are silent on where they stand.

"The initiative for the UN universal decriminalisation declaration came from the inspiring French black activist and gay rights campaigner, Louis-Georges Tin, the founder of the <http://www.idahomophobia.org/> International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO). He lobbied the French government, which agreed to take the lead in getting the declaration tabled at the UN. Member organisations of the global IDAHO network then petitioned their individual governments to support it.

"A reminder as to why this UN declaration matters occurred last Friday, a sad anniversary. On 5 December 2007, Makvan Mouloudzadeh, a 21-year-old Iranian man, was hanged in Kermanshah Central Prison, after an unfair trial. A member of Iran's persecuted Kurdish minority, he was executed on charges of raping other boys when he was 13. In other words, he committed these alleged acts when he was minor. According to Iranian law, a boy under 15 is a minor and cannot be executed. At Makvan's mockery of a trial, the alleged rape victims retracted their previous statements, saying they had made their allegations under duress. Makvan pleaded not guilty, telling the court that his confession was made under torture. He was hanged anyway, without a shred of credible evidence that he had even had sex with the boys, let alone raped them. The lies, defamation and homophobia of the debauched Iranian legal system was exposed when hundreds of villagers attended Makvan's funeral. People don't mourn rapists. This execution was bared-faced homophobic judicial murder, according to Arsham Parsi, Executive Director, of the underground Iranian Queer Railroad, which helps Iranian LGBTs fleeing arrest, torture and execution.

"Makvan's fate is just one example of the thousands of state-sponsored acts of homophobic persecution that happen worldwide ever year. It shows why Wednesday's UN declaration is so important - and so long overdue," said Mr Tatchell.

UPDATE

CORRECTION:

The presentation of the declaration for the worldwide decriminalisation of homosexuality is now expected to take place at the UN General Assembly between 15 and 20 December - not on 10 December as previously reported.

This means there is still time to lobby governments to sign up and support it.

The list of supporting countries is growing but still well short of a majority.

With coordinated, concerted lobbying efforts by LGBT and human rights organisations we can persuade more countries to endorse this declaration.

Please redouble your efforts to get your local legislators and political leaders to press your government to declare its commitment to support the declaration - if it has not done so.

If your government has already announced its support for the declaration, please use whatever influence you can muster with neighbouring governments that have not yet signed up.

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