

Governments Condemn Extrajudicial Executions in Seminal UN Vote

Historic First Condemnation of Killings Based on Gender Identity

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For Immediate Release

(New York) An international coalition of organizations dedicated to human rights celebrated yesterday's historic vote in the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly to pass resolution [A/C.3/67/L.36](#) condemning extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. The vote reversed the events of 2010 when the same body voted to strip the resolution of reference to "sexual orientation." The UNGA also expanded upon its commitment to the universality of human rights by including "gender identity" for the first time in the resolution's history.

The resolution, which is introduced biennially in the Third Committee, urges States to protect the right to life of all people, including by calling upon states to investigate killings based on discriminatory grounds. It was introduced by the Government of Sweden and co-sponsored by 34 states from around the world.

For the past 12 years, this resolution has urged States "to investigate promptly and thoroughly all killings, including... all killings committed for any discriminatory reason, including sexual orientation." Apart from [Human Rights Council resolution 17/19](#), it is the only UN resolution to make specific reference to sexual orientation. This year, the term "gender identity" was added to the list of categories vulnerable to extrajudicial killings.

At Tuesday's session, the United Arab Emirates, speaking on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, presented an [amendment](#) that would have stripped the resolution of reference to "sexual orientation and gender identity" and substituted "or for any other reason." The UAE proposal was rejected in a vote with 44 votes in favor, 86 against, and 31 abstentions and 32 absent. Another failed effort, led by the Holy See, would have stripped all specific references to groups at high risk for execution; however it was never formally introduced.

The Third Committee also retained language expressing "deep concern" over the continuing instances of arbitrary killing resulting from the use of capital punishment in a manner that violates international law, which some States led by Singapore attempted to have deleted. The Singapore proposal was rejected in a vote with 50 votes in favor, 78 against, and 37 abstentions and 30 absent.

The full resolution passed with 108 votes in favor, 1 against, 65 abstentions, and 19 absent. (While the voting screen showed no vote from Trinidad & Tobago, the state representative took the floor after the tally to explain their intention to vote in favor of the full resolution.)

Many governments, including Brazil, the United States and South Africa, among others, spoke out to condemn the proposed amendment to remove reference to sexual orientation and gender

identity. The Government of Japan ended the silence that has often characterized the Asian Group's participation on LGBT rights at the UNGA by stating, "We cannot tolerate any killings of persons because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Our delegation voted against the proposed amendment to this paragraph because we think it is meaningful to mention such killings from the perspective of protecting the rights of LGBT people."

Some governments condemned the reference to sexual orientation and gender identity, including Sudan on behalf of the Arab Group, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Trinidad and Tobago stated that specific reference to "gender identity" presented a "particular challenge" for the country. Speaking frequently, the Government of Egypt stated that it was "gravely alarmed at the attempt to legitimate undetermined concepts like gender identity" by equating them with other forms of discrimination such as that based on race, color, sex, religion, and language. In reference to sexual orientation and gender identity, Egypt stated, "We are alarmed at the attempts to make new rights or new standards."

The vote affirms the resolution's dramatic conclusion in 2010. At that time, the Third Committee [removed the reference to "sexual orientation"](#) by a vote of 79 in favor, 70 opposed, with 17 abstaining and 26 not voting and was silent on "gender identity." However, in a remarkable turn of events, the resolution was later introduced before the full General Assembly, which [voted to reinstate the language](#) by passing it 93 to 55, with 27 abstentions and 17 absent or not voting.

The states' decision on Tuesday to support the inclusion of "sexual orientation" and introduce "gender identity" into the resolution is one more in a series of positive developments the UN and in regional human rights systems where there is increasingly recognition of the need for protection from discrimination regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. The successful expansion of the resolution to include "gender identity" on *Transgender Day of Remembrance*, a day dedicated to those murdered as a result of their gender identity or expression, was particularly significant.

THE VOTE

- For a full vote on the [Singapore Amendment](#), [click here](#). For a photograph of the vote, [click here](#).
- For a full vote on the [United Arab Emirates Amendment](#) to remove sexual orientation and gender identity, [click here](#). For a photograph of the vote, [click here](#).
- For a full vote on the passage of the [Extrajudicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions Resolutions](#), [click here](#). For a photograph of the vote, [click here](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS RESPOND

Amnesty International, International

"The resolution also focuses attention on another way, little explored by the UN up to now, that the death penalty as such does violence to human rights," said Amnesty International's UN representative, José Luis Díaz. "The Third Committee sent a strong message, reaffirming everyone must be protected from extrajudicial killings and keeping language Singapore and

others sought to expunge, thereby upholding fundamental principles of human rights and the rule of law.”

Arc International, International

"More than half of the world's nations have now spoken, and we call upon the minority of countries that still oppose LGBT rights to bring their laws into conformity with international standards," said Kim Vance, Co-Director, Arc International.

GAYa NUSANTARA, Indonesia

“We commend the steadfastness of those governments who showed their commitment to the universality of human rights principles, and urge those who have not to do so in future resolutions,” said Dédé Oetomo of GAYa NUSANTARA.

Global Action for Trans* Equality (GATE), International

“The inclusion of gender identity in the Resolution on Extrajudicial Executions is an historical landmark for trans* people around the world, who are commemorating today an International Day of Remembrance, honoring those killed by transphobic violence. In the context of this Resolution, language on gender identity would contribute decisively to dismantle that violence," said Mauro Cabral, Co-Director, GATE

Human Rights Watch, International

“The right to life, liberty and security of the person is a basic human right. It is shocking to see how often people are killed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity,” said Boris Dittrich, advocacy director in the LGBT program at Human Rights Watch “With this vote the majority of states acknowledge this serious problem and seek to redress it.”

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, International

“With yesterday’s UN vote, a majority of governments worldwide decisively rebutted the ideology of hate and affirmed the simple but fundamental premise that LGBT people have a right to exist,” said Jessica Stern, executive director of the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). “By some measure, this is a low bar, but progress is incremental and every step must be celebrated in advancing human rights for everyone, everywhere.”

Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (OTD), Chile

“The passage of this resolution is the recognition that the lives and dignity of Trans people (transsexual, transgender, transvestite and intersex) and of lesbian, gay and bisexual people cannot continue to be taken with impunity. Today people are executed and/or murdered because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, which is an aberration we should be ashamed of as a society and as human beings. Today, states have spoken. They have recognized that life is a right and that they have the responsibility to protect it regardless of an individual’s sexual

orientation and gender identity. Today the work of civil society has paid off, and we can move forward continuing to advance rights,” said Andrés Rivera Duarte, Director of OTD.

RFSL: The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, Sweden

“We appreciate Sweden's lead on this important resolution for the first time explicitly mentioning inclusion of those persecuted on the grounds of gender identity and are very happy with the outcome,” said Ulrika Westerlund, President of RFSL, the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights.

Sayoni, Singapore

"As LGBT citizens of Singapore, we applaud the government of Singapore for voting to include SOGI in the resolution to stop extra judicial killings. It sends a clear message affirming the sanctity of every human life. However, we are disappointed that the government of Singapore abstained from voting on passage of the resolution. This absence represents a missed opportunity to further protect the rights of LGBTIQ persons all over the world and shows little regard for the fate of its citizens," said Jean Chong of Sayoni

SPECTRUM, Uganda

“Don’t legalise killings and murders based on sexual orientation and gender identity,” said Moses Mulindwa, SPECTRUM.

SPoD, Social Policies, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Studies Association, Turkey

“SPoD welcomes UN General Assembly’s decision to include both sexual orientation and gender identity within the resolution. This historic vote, including gender identity, sends a clear message to all governments that LGBT individuals should be protected from extrajudicial executions. However, we are highly disappointed to see the Turkish Government abstained from the vote on the adoption of such a crucial resolution and absent on the vote on whether or not to include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity as within Turkey an alarming number of LGBT people are killed every year,” said Onur Fidangul, International Coordinator, SPoD.

TLF Share, Philippines

"The historic vote of the UN against extrajudicial executions sends a strong signal to the international community that collectively, we stand against the appalling execution of individuals because of their sexual orientation & gender identity. We have just shattered that wall of silence that has allowed this grave form of abuse to persist in many countries worldwide, and we hope that this would lead to an end to extrajudicial executions of LGBTs. We are disappointed, however, with the abstention of the Philippine government. It must realize that with its silence on EJE, it is condoning this reprehensible abuse against LGBTs," said Jonas Bagas, Director, TLF Share

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