



16 August 2014 – Although we have seen improvements in advancing LGBTI rights in recent years, there is still a long way to go before these rights are universally accepted.

Same-sex marriages is now legal in 17 countries, and a handful of countries legally recognize gender based on self-identification alone, with Argentina and Nepal leading the way and Denmark recently joining their ranks. Despite these advancements, however, LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) persons still face worldwide discrimination.

There are 76 countries worldwide that criminalize homosexuality, and almost every country in the world retains legal provisions that impinge on the rights of transgender people - exposing them to some of the highest rates of violence of any group of people in the world.

In the past year, several countries have sought to implement laws that infringe upon the rights of LGBTI persons even further. Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill, for instance, was passed earlier this year before the country's Constitutional Court annulled it. And in the beginning of 2014, Nigeria passed a Same-sex Marriage Prohibition Bill, which imposes prison sentences for people who enter into same-sex unions or aid such practices or LGBT NGOs. Moreover, in June 2013 Russia passed a law that prohibits "propaganda for nontraditional sexual relationships".

### LGBTI rights and the UN

"The UN has diplomatic dialogues all over the world and mentions of LGBT rights have come up in those situations," explains Charles Radcliffe, Chief of the Global Issues Section at the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ( [OHCHR](#) ). He states that activists have asked for UN support, and for the UN to make this support more visible. One such manifestation of support is the UN's [Free and](#)

[Equal](#) campaign - a global effort that recently published a map demonstrating that LGBTI and related identities have been present in various forms throughout history.

OHCHR's Radcliffe notes: "Supporting LGBT rights work around the world is about recognizing that hostilities toward LGBT people are deeply ingrained in societies and that changing those mindsets and protecting these people is the duty of governments."

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