



## UN To Offer Pro-Gay Resolution Today

BY ON TOP MAGAZINE STAFF  
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Today the United Nations General Assembly is expected to read a resolution endorsed by more than 50 countries around the world that addresses rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. It calls for the universal decriminalization of being gay.

Human Rights Watch has urged all countries to support the statement. So far, 55 have done so including: Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chile, Ecuador, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Montenegro, New Zealand, San Marino, Serbia, Switzerland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Uruguay, and Venezuela, along with all 27 European Union member states.

More than 80 countries have laws against homosexuality, including nine that prescribe death as punishment. "This statement shows a growing global consensus that such abusive laws have outlived their time," said Grace Poore of Malaysia, who works with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

A Human Rights Watch report delivered on December 17 found that more than half of the world's remaining laws criminalizing being gay are relics of British colonial rule.

The roots of anti-gay laws from nearly 40 countries can be traced back to a single instance imposed by British colonial rulers on India in 1860, say the authors of *This Alien Legacy: The Origins of "Sodomy" Laws in British Colonialism*. Ironically, homosexuality remains illegal in India, where the UN has pressured a high court to abolish the practice. A decision is expected early next year.

"From Malaysia to Uganda, governments use these laws to harass civil society, restrict free expression, discredit enemies, and destroy lives," said Scott Long, director of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights program at Human Rights Watch. "And sodomy laws add to the spread of HIV/AIDS by criminalizing outreach to affected groups."

**Gay rights leaders in the United States were appalled to learn of the Vatican's opposition to the resolution because it might promote gay marriage.**

**"As faith leaders we were shocked by Vatican opposition to this proposed initiative," a coalition of gay rights leaders said in a statement. "Most Catholics, and indeed most Catholic teachings, tell us that all people are entitled to live with basic human dignity without the threat of violence."**

The statement signed on by the Human Rights Campaign, along with faith program directors from the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and National Black Justice Coalition also urged "U.S. Leaders to stand against discrimination."

"In 1948 the world's nations set forth the promise of human rights, but six decades later, the promise is unfulfilled for many," said Linda Baumann of Namibia, a board member of Pan Africa ILGA, a coalition of pro-gay groups. "The unprecedented African support for this statement sends a message that abuses against LGBT people are unacceptable anywhere, ever."

The statement carries no power of law, but it does send a powerful signal to the world. It condemns violence, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatization and prejudice based on sexual orientation and gender identity. And declares that targeting gays for executions or killings, torture, arbitrary arrest or deprivation of economic, social and cultural rights is wrong.

“Universal means universal, and there are no exceptions,” said Boris Dittrich, advocacy director of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights programs at Human Rights Watch. “The UN must speak forcefully against violence and prejudice, because there is no room for half measures where human rights are concerned.”

Louis-Georges Tin, the founder of the International Day against Homophobia (IDAHO), who believes that the gay community will not be advanced until societal homophobia is eradicated said: “It is a great achievement that this initiative has made it to the level of the General Assembly. It shows our common struggles are successful and should be reinforced.”

The reading marks the first time the General Assembly has formally addressed the issue.