

Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons Worldwide: A State Department Priority

Fact Sheet
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“As Secretary, I join with my colleagues at our embassies, consulates and USAID missions around the world in saying no matter where you are and no matter who you love, we stand with you.”

– Secretary of State John Kerry

The U.S. Department of State champions the protection of the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals worldwide as an Obama Administration foreign policy priority. By supporting the inherent dignity of each person, the United States leads by example and advances our values.

LGBT Rights a Foreign Policy Cornerstone

Advancing equality for LGBT persons is fundamental to promoting democracy and human rights throughout the world. Inclusive societies are better international partners and better neighbors.

Department Tools

The State Department uses a wide range of diplomatic and assistance tools to press for the elimination of violence and discrimination against LGBT persons worldwide:

- **Countering Laws that Criminalize LGBT Status**
The State Department works through U.S. embassies, civil society, and multilateral agencies to encourage countries to repeal or reform laws that criminalize LGBT status. To guide this effort, the Department created a resource toolkit for all U.S. embassies and established a rapid response mechanism to address emerging crises in particular countries.
- **Research and Resources for U.S. Embassies**
The Department’s annual Human Rights Report includes information on the human rights situation for LGBT persons in every country. Region-specific LGBT strategies have been developed that provide U.S. embassies with analysis, resources, and public outreach strategies for engagement with government officials and civil society.

- Embassy Programs and Personal Engagement
In 2012, nearly 90 U.S. missions held Pride-related events. Already in 2013, Ambassadors and embassy staff have participated in Pride marches and IDAHO celebrations around the world and provided safe spaces for LGBT organizations to connect with one another and the broader human rights advocacy community.

The Global Equality Fund

The Department launched the Global Equality Fund (GEF) in December 2011 to advance the human rights of LGBT persons worldwide. In partnership with a number of countries, corporations, and foundations, the GEF has funded emergency and long-term programs to protect the human rights of LGBT persons in over 25 countries. The Fund provides human rights defenders with legal representation, security, and, when necessary, relocation support.

Since 2010, the Department has provided critical assistance to more than 70 LGBT defenders and advocates around the world.

Consular and Travel Assistance

- The Bureau of Consular Affairs has streamlined procedures and simplified requirements for changing the sex listed on a transgender American's passport.
- The Department provides travel information specific to LGBT persons on travel.state.gov, including information about attitudes, harassment, or arrests important for LGBT travelers.

Department Personnel Policy

The State Department announced extension of the full range of legally available benefits and allowances to same-sex domestic partners of Foreign Service staff serving abroad.

- The Department enables same-sex couples to obtain passports under the names recognized by their state through their marriages or civil unions.
- The Department's equal employment opportunity policy includes protections against discriminatory treatment of employees and job applicants based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

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