



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ISSUE: ENCOURAGE US DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL LGBT ISSUES AS LEGITIMATE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

POLICY DESCRIPTION: many countries, from Brazil to Germany, in its support for LGBT communities and equality goals abroad, have surpassed The United States. The State Department has itself documented abuse this year in over 100 countries worldwide, where LGBT individuals have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, rape, legal discrimination, hate crimes and murder. Often local authorities ignore or are complicit in such abuse. Laws that openly discriminate against foreign LGBT citizens also exist in many countries. US embassies must do more to address these human rights violations against LGBT communities, while urging the repeal or revision of discriminatory laws, in keeping with US principles of equality and respect for diversity.

RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGE: We recommend that the US State Department adopt three new policy goals that would increase our diplomatic engagement on LGBT issues as legitimate human rights concerns. By supporting LGBT human rights concerns internationally, the US government has the opportunity to send an important message—and to many around the world a startling message—about America’s renewed commitment to global diversity. If this message is framed within a broad commitment to human rights, not just a narrow (but important) commitment to LGBT concerns, America’s support for international LGBT rights could also help signal a larger shift in US foreign policy. And it could eventually set the foundation for a new working relationship with the European Union and with several Latin American countries that have taken the lead in recent years in pressing LGBT human rights concerns on the international stage.

We recommend the adoption of the following State Department goals, with support for these goals articulated at the most senior levels of the State Department:

- Seek a strategic partnership with key regional countries and, where possible, regional blocs (e.g., the European Union) and institutions (e.g., the UN Human Rights Council), aimed at fostering an LGBT-inclusive vision of America’s commitment to human rights.
- Carry out formal diplomatic approaches (“demarches”)—at Ambassadorial or, at minimum,



A new beginning: Policy recommendations to improve the lives of LGBT people and eliminate discrimination from federal policies

Deputy Chief of Mission level—in countries where security forces are complicit in LGBT human rights abuse or in failing to investigate/punish such abuse, or where governments criminalize private homosexual activity between consenting adults.

- Strengthen Country Team efforts within the State Department to encourage the repeal of LGBT-discriminatory laws in a select list of countries where American influence is strong and where LGBT discrimination is egregious.

PROCESS FOR MAKING CHANGES: None of these changes would require legislative action. These policies could be implanted through the personal leadership of the next Secretary of State.