



# **TURNING THE TIDE**

**A Toolkit to Combat  
Anti-Gender Extremism**

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### About GATE

GATE is an international advocacy organization working towards justice and equality for trans, gender diverse, and intersex (TGDI) communities. Rooted in our movements, we work collaboratively with strategic partners at the global level to provide knowledge, resources, and access to international institutions and processes. Our vision is a world free from human rights violations based on gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. Our strategy is to transform the landscape of global advocacy, knowledge creation, and resource distribution through critical inclusion of trans, gender diverse, and intersex movements at all levels of political, legal, and socio-economic processes. Find out more about GATE by visiting [gate.ngo](http://gate.ngo)

# INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed for trans and gender diverse activists who may be targeted by individual or organizational attacks from the anti-gender movement. GATE has compiled recommendations on how to respond to such attacks. As local leaders, you know your communities best, so we recommend that these guidelines be carefully considered within the bigger picture of your work and filtered through your unique expertise. These guidelines are tried and tested, grounded in human psychology, and can be adapted to local contexts to be culturally responsive.

For those who are interested in going deeper into this topic, please see the following resources developed by GATE and our partners:



**Anti-Gender  
Movements  
Overview**



**Recognizing,  
Documenting,  
and Addressing  
Anti-Gender  
Opposition**



**Messages that  
build support for  
transgender rights**

A toolkit for effective communications strategies



# OVERVIEW

Across the globe, trans and gender diverse people are being targeted by anti-gender movements operating at social, political, and institutional levels. Over the past several years, trans-led advocacy organizations have faced escalating attacks from actors within the anti-gender movement and other allied extremists who hold regressive views of gender and family. The anti-gender movement does not have a singular definition, but it is understood to be extremist fringe organizations, well-funded and well-orchestrated, that oppose so-called gender ideology, gender theory, or genderism. In general, these anti-gender extremists seek to restore a “traditional” family structure and argue that doing so is a matter of morality and social stability. In today’s landscape, these attacks have become more squarely focused on issues such as equality for trans and gender diverse people and access to reproductive healthcare, but the roots of the movement include opposition to women working outside of the home and other issues many within the general public would consider to be outdated, unpopular, and even dangerous. And, as anti-gender extremists have amassed mainstream power and large funding, their influence has allowed them to cause even greater harm. By focusing on issues like trans equality, anti-gender extremists seek to exploit an issue that is still misunderstood by many members of the general public. These actors prey on the unfamiliarity of otherwise well-meaning members of the public and seek to create division between trans and gender diverse folks, their loved ones and allies, and other members of society who are susceptible to fear-based tactics and manipulation.

In just the last year (2023-2024), leading organizations like GATE and their partners have been targeted by opposing organizations, tabloid news outlets, and even high-ranking officials who seek to discredit and undermine the good work of organizations seeking to ensure justice and safety for the trans and gender diverse community and other marginalized populations. A lack of familiarity with trans people, paired with increasing fear-based tactics,

has resulted in a hostile media climate for our communities. Elected leaders and other highly influential stakeholders have begun using their positions of power to target and harass trans and gender diverse people, sex workers, migrants, and other marginalized people. Escalating attacks have included: discriminatory legislation, both introduced and passed; harmful resolutions and public statements from elected and appointed officials; antagonistic media pieces; death threats; revealing identifying information online (doxxing) and cyber harassment of individual leaders; and unfounded attacks on organizational credibility. These attacks create a chilling effect, discouraging advocates and other members of society from engaging while many governments are actively passing laws that punish those who publicly oppose anti-gender stakeholders and ideas.

Our analysis shows that anti-gender movements are growing in power and geographical reach and becoming more successful in pushing back against the hard-won gains by LGBTIQ+ communities. The antidote to these attacks is increased familiarity with trans and gender diverse people, as well as a deeper understanding of the issues where anti-gender extremists seek to create division. By sharing our stories and expertise as trans and gender diverse people, people who need access to reproductive healthcare, and people who benefit from open and fair democracy, we can combat the cultural impacts of fear and misunderstanding.

**GATE is focused on building the capacity of trans and gender diverse communities to respond effectively to anti-gender movements operating at the international, regional, and national levels.**

As organizations and individuals continue to respond to these attacks, GATE has compiled a series of recommendations and guidelines.

# RESPONDING TO ATTACKS GENERAL GUIDELINES

## 1

### PAUSE

Initial reactions may be raw, volatile, and emotional. That is natural. Share your reactions with your team and those close to you, but pause before responding externally from this place. Public responses can nearly always wait several hours or even days. Pausing is important to give your body and brain a moment to come down from any trauma response that may have been triggered upon hearing of the attack.

## 2

### ASSESS

Determining whether, how, where, and to whom to respond is critically important and requires an assessment of key audiences. This assessment can be done now, outside of a crisis timeline, and involves analyzing all internal and external audiences: staff, board members, donors, key organizational partners, influential stakeholders, organizational membership that can be reached via email, social media followers, and the media. For more information on how to conduct this assessment, please see [GATE's Organizational Strengthening Training course](#).

# 3

## CONSIDER

Public statements are not the only way to respond, and they are often not the most strategic way to respond. Assess your various audiences and determine whether the general public is an audience that requires an immediate response. Some bad actors do not deserve any public response, and private official channels may be available to file formal complaints and seek remedies. In all likelihood, the general public can wait, in which case the media do not need to receive any proactive statements from you or your organization.

# 4

## REMEMBER

When responding to bad actors in crisis communications situations, bad actors are not our audience. Our focus should be members of the general public who hold conflicting opinions on this topic. People who are conflicted on issues of equality may generally want to do the right thing, but fear-mongering and a lack of familiarity with trans and gender diverse folks leave them easily persuaded by opponent rhetoric. When conflicted audiences hear name-calling, even when directed at opponents, they can become defensive and tune out the rest of your message.

# 5

## CONNECT

Don't underestimate the power of personal stories and human emotion. Focusing on the emotional impact of these attacks allows members of the general public to connect with trans and gender diverse people and provides an opportunity for them to hear the unique expertise and perspectives of those most impacted. Arguing over the facts will always be far less powerful than responding with emotion that contextualizes real human impact. We have an opportunity to counteract stereotypes by responding with vulnerability, empathy, and authenticity.

# 6

## ASSERT

Moving forward, find ongoing opportunities to stay proactive instead of reactive. In the face of crisis communications, consider how to proactively assert the narrative you prefer. One of the best ways to do so is through ongoing, proactive, first-person storytelling so that trans and gender diverse individuals can share their experiences and expertise in their own words.



# OTHER TIPS

- Consider the physical safety and well-being of everyone impacted and do what you can to mitigate potential harm. This will require concrete resource allocation, so consider collective discussions now to clarify organizational policies to prepare for potential safety crises.
- If a colleague or staff member of yours has been the victim of cyber-harassment or doxxing, consult with the impacted parties about their preferences and needs, and then, as an organization, communicate that out to other organizational partners on their behalf.
- You may be overwhelmed with questions and unclear offers of support. The first several times you explain the situation, it will be a blur. Begin to copy and paste email content into talking points for yourself to prevent additional mental burden. This will be particularly helpful if you are impacted emotionally by the crisis.
  - Keep talking points extremely simple. Think in groups of three. For example:
    - Gratitude for outreach and offers of support.
    - Brief substance/description of emotional impact.
    - Preview of your next steps over the coming days.
  - Repeat, repeat, and repeat. Message discipline is your friend.
  - This structure will also help you construct a media response if you decide to respond to incoming media inquiries.

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