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the Economic and Social Council***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

In response to the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which focuses on access to justice for all women and girls and reviews commitments on participation in public life and the elimination of violence, this statement by the LGBTI Caucus addresses the legal, political, and structural exclusion of LGBTI+ people worldwide.

Despite growing international attention to gender equality, LGBTI+ individuals remain systematically marginalized in legal systems. Although the discrimination faced by LGBTI+ people stems from rigid gender norms, they are not automatically protected within gender equality frameworks unless explicitly included. Ensuring access to justice, participation, and protection from violence requires deliberate attention to the lived experiences of LGBTI+ persons, reflected in national laws, global policies, and multilateral mechanisms.

Access to Justice for LGBTI+ Persons

In 2025, consensual same-sex intimacy remains criminalized in 60+ countries (often due to entrenched colonial-era laws), and in many more, laws targeting so-called “public morality,” vagrancy, “cross-dressing” or national security are used to target, harass, and punish LGBTI+ individuals. Trans and gender diverse people face extensive barriers to obtaining legal documents that reflect their gender identity, restricting access to health care, education, employment, housing, and mobility. Legal gender recognition, where available, is often conditional on pathologizing, invasive medical procedures, sterilization, psychiatric diagnosis, or surgical “proof”.

Intersex persons continue to be subjected to irreversible, non-consensual, medically unnecessary interventions in infancy and childhood, with lifelong adverse physical and psychological consequences. These procedures violate bodily autonomy and are frequently justified under damaging norms of binary sex and gender conformity. Legal systems in most countries provide little to no protection or redress for these harms.

Lesbians and bisexuals continue to experience violence and discrimination based in misogyny, lesbophobia, and biphobia, leading to high risk of experiencing sexual violence, criminalization, and murder, exacerbated in countries with authoritarian governments. Legal systems actively punish, ignore or erase lesbians and bisexuals, resulting in lack of protection and limited access to justice.

Beyond formal legal exclusion, LGBTI+ individuals face institutional and administrative discrimination in accessing justice. Survivors of violence are often dismissed, ridiculed, or revictimized by law enforcement and judicial personnel, discouraging them from seeking redress, meanwhile legal systems frequently rely on binary gender norms.

In conflict and humanitarian settings, LGBTI+ persons face heightened risks of violence and exclusion from protection systems, including those displaced internally or across borders. Many fear registering with UNHCR due to discrimination or retaliation, and even when registered, remain vulnerable to violence with limited accountability or support.

Structural barriers intersect with other forms of marginalization. LGBTI+ persons who are Indigenous, racialized, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, youth, sex workers, and living in poverty face compounded intersectional challenges. Undocumented and stateless LGBTI+ individuals risk detention or deportation when seeking justice. Those with disabilities may be denied legal capacity. Sex workers face criminalization, forced evictions, and police violence. LGBTI+ youth, particularly those estranged from families, unhoused, or in State care, are often unable to access justice due to age restrictions.

In response, many LGBTI+ communities create informal, community-led justice mechanisms. However, these remain under-recognized and under-resourced despite their essential role.

Participation in Public Life and the Elimination of Violence

LBTI+ individuals face systemic exclusion from political and decision-making spaces through denial of legal recognition, political targeting, and criminalization. Trans and gender diverse persons without gender-affirming documentation may be denied the right to vote, run for office, access justice or register organizations. In some countries, public advocacy for LBTI+ rights and Pride marches are criminalized under anti-propaganda and anti-advocacy laws, resulting in police violence and arbitrary arrests.

Even where participation is formally allowed, LBTI+ persons face surveillance, harassment, and reprisals that disproportionately affect LBTI human rights defenders, especially trans and gender-diverse activists, sex workers, and displaced persons. Online threats, smear campaigns, and digital censorship are common. LBTI+ persons and organizations face access bans to their websites and social media accounts, restricting their ability to operate and communicate. There are often restrictions on receiving funding, while civil society organizations working on LBTI+ issues are refused registration or face arbitrary closure.

LBTI+ sex workers face criminalization, censorship, and restrictive legal frameworks, including end-demand approaches and digital legislation such as FOSTA-SESTA in the United States, that has global impact, that have resulted in deplatforming, restrictions on digital organizing, loss of safety and income, and increased exposure to violence.

Inhumane drug laws and policies target those who use drugs, and LBTI+ communities are usually targeted disproportionately, often to intimidate them and discourage them from accessing justice. Moreover, anti-gender movements and authoritarian regimes increasingly target LBTI+ communities as part of broader strategies to roll back rights, suppress civil society, delegitimize gender equality efforts and push for broader anti-democratic agendas. They have also targeted LBTI+ communities as part of broader strategies to roll back rights, suppress civil society, and delegitimize gender equality efforts, reinforcing patriarchal and heteronormative control.

While the elimination of violence against all women and girls cannot be achieved without specific attention to the violence experienced by LBTI+ people. LBTI+ people face exclusion from public discourse through the erasure of their experiences in education systems, national plans, and gender equality frameworks. When included, it's often not meaningful, but tokenistic. Lesbian and bisexual women are at heightened risk of intimate partner and family violence, particularly sexual violence leading to higher risk of sexually transmitted infections, and often lack access to health and services.

Young LBTI+ people, especially those estranged from families or in State care, are systematically excluded from civic and political life, with limited opportunities to shape decisions affecting them.

Trans women, particularly those who are Black, Indigenous, fat, sex workers, forcibly displaced, stateless and undocumented, face disproportionate levels of gender-based violence, which can be fatal. Intersex people experience lifelong physical and psychological consequences from non-consensual medically unnecessary surgeries. Shelters and sexual violence services may turn away trans women or lack inclusive policies for intersex and non-binary persons. Legal definitions frequently exclude SOGIESC-based harms. Health and social service providers often lack training and policies to deliver affirming, rights-based care.

Participation and protection are inseparable. Violence undermines civic participation, while meaningful inclusion strengthens prevention and response. Advancing gender equality requires addressing barriers to participation for LBTI+ persons, including legal recognition, protection for defenders, support for LBTI-led initiatives, and safe civic spaces.

Recommendations

1. To ensure that the goals of CSW70 are meaningfully inclusive of LGBTI+ persons, the LGBTI+ Caucus calls on Member States, UN agencies, and relevant stakeholders to:
Explicitly include LGBTI+ women, intersex and gender diverse persons, in all Agreed Conclusions and outcomes of CSW70, ensuring recognition as rights-holders in both justice and participation frameworks.
2. Repeal laws that criminalize the lives and livelihoods of LGBTI+ persons, including those related to consensual same-sex intimacy, gender diversity, gender expression, non-heteronormative family structures, and sex work. Eliminate vague legal provisions such as 'public morality' or 'national security' that are used to target LGBTI+ individuals and organizations.
3. Adopt legal gender recognition laws based on self-determination, accessible to all persons without requirements for surgery, sterilization, psychiatric evaluation, or other medical procedures.
4. Prohibit all forms of so-called conversion therapy, conversion tactics, and non-consensual medically unnecessary interventions on intersex children and adults, and establish mechanisms for redress and compensation for survivors.
5. Recognize and protect LGBTI+ human rights defenders and LGBTI+ people participating in public life, including through national protection mechanisms, and legal aid and justice services that are inclusive of LGBTI+ individuals, and ensure that civic space remains open for LGBTI+ led organizations and movements, and that there is SOGIESC-sensitive training for law enforcement, judicial officers, and service providers.
6. Ensure the meaningful participation of LGBTI+ persons in public and political life, including through the development of temporary special measures, dedicated funding for LGBTI-led initiatives and explicit representation in national, regional, and global policy forums with attention to rural and grassroots LGBTI voices often excluded from decision-making.
7. Integrate LGBTI+ perspectives into national and local action plans on gender-based violence, and ensure that all services are inclusive and affirming of LGBTI+ survivors, including in shelter, health care, and psychosocial support.
8. Establish inclusive and ethical data collection systems that disaggregate by sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, and recognize the value of community-led data and research in informing evidence-based policy and recognizing the expertise of LGBTI+ organizations in tracking violence and discrimination.
9. Address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of LGBTI+ persons who experience intersecting forms of marginalization, including but not limited to Black, Indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees and other forcibly displaced populations, people with disabilities, sex workers, those affected by anti-fatness, youth, and those living in conflict and post-conflict settings or in rural or remote areas.
10. Justice mechanisms must address online violence, surveillance, and digital harassment, which disproportionately target LGBTI+ persons and undermine safe participation in public life.
11. Ensure meaningful participation and protection of young LGBTI+ people, including those estranged from families or in state care, by removing age-related barriers to justice and civic engagement.
12. Ensure sustainable, flexible, and accessible funding for LGBTI-led organizations, especially in the Global South where movements remain severely underfunded, particularly those working at the intersections of displacement, disability, sex work, poverty, and conflict.
13. Mandate SOGIESC-sensitive training for all personnel in justice and law enforcement, personnel serving in UNHCR affiliated refugee camps with clear accountability mechanisms for discriminatory behavior health, and

psychosocial services to ensure accessibility and affirming support for LBTI+ survivors of violence.

14. Collaborate with States and LBTI+ people to provide accountability frameworks to ensure States are ensuring progress on these goals, leading to a reduction in violence and discrimination, and increased access to justice for LBTI+ people.

Conclusion

LBTI+ people and issues are increasingly instrumentalized as political wedge tools to undermine gender equality and pro-democracy efforts globally. Achieving justice, equality, and the elimination of violence for all women and girls requires the full and explicit inclusion of LBTI+ people in all their diversity. Without legal reform, structural inclusion, and protection from violence, LBTI+ communities will continue to face exclusion and harm.

The Commission on the Status of Women plays a critical role in ensuring that global gender equality efforts reflect the lived realities of all those affected by gender-based discrimination. CSW70 presents an opportunity to strengthen accountability, advance intersectional approaches, and take concrete steps toward justice and inclusion. The LBTI Caucus urges Member States to reaffirm the universality and indivisibility of human rights, and to commit to sustained, inclusive action to realize the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.