



United States Mission to the OSCE

In Observance of Pride Month

As delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i., James E. Donegan
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 24, 2021

The *Helsinki Final Act* recognizes the “inherent dignity of the human person.” Every participating State pledged to respect the human rights of all individuals.

June is Pride Month in the United States and many other countries. I was glad to see the vibrant Pride festivities here in Vienna this past weekend. At home during Pride Month, we celebrate the many enriching contributions of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Americans to our nation’s life. We recall the cruelty and injustice they endured and still often face. And we honor the brave trailblazers who stood up loudly and proudly to demand respect for their rights. As President Biden said to our LGBTQI+ community: “We see you, we support you, and we are inspired by your courage to accept nothing less than full equality.” As we join our fellow Americans in the unfinished work of building a more perfect union in our own country, we also are mindful that this community remains the target of discrimination, harassment, and violence around the world, including in the OSCE region.

In **Russia**, a law banning so-called gay “propaganda” is used to restrict the freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly for gay men and women. In 2018 in this Council, the United States joined fifteen participating States in invoking the *Moscow Mechanism* over allegations of serious abuses against this community and others in Chechnya. The resulting Expert Mission report found a climate of impunity for arbitrary detention, torture, extrajudicial killings, and other serious abuses, but to this day the Russian government has taken no action to end it. LGBTQI+ persons from Chechnya are not safe even in other regions of Russia. After months of abuse by her family, Khalimat Taramova, a Chechen woman who identifies as bisexual, escaped to a shelter in neighboring Dagestan, only to be abducted on June 10 by Chechen police and forcibly returned to Chechnya. She remains in grave danger.

In **Azerbaijan**, this community is subjected to discrimination and violent crimes, including family-based violence with impunity. There were recent reports of street attacks against members of this community in Baku.

We are troubled by **Hungary**’s recent passage of a new law that puts major limits on portraying different sexual orientations and gender identities in the media, advertisements, and education allegedly to protect persons under age 18. We reject any suggestion that anyone, anywhere needs to be protected from this community.

We continue to monitor events in **Poland**, which saw a rise in homophobic rhetoric during 2019-2020 national elections. Over 90 localities passed resolutions rejecting “LGBT ideology” or “Family Rights Charters” which frame “family values” in a way that excludes LGBTQI+ persons. We are deeply concerned about any moves that create an atmosphere of stigma and discrimination towards such individuals.

In **Turkey**, officials regularly withhold permits for LGBTQI+ events and impose advertising restrictions on rainbow flags and other Pride products. Police and prosecutors rarely pursue violent crimes against members of this community, and judges routinely reduce the sentences of those who murder solely on the basis of their victim's sexuality. Hate speech by senior government officials increased in recent years. Senior government officials targeted the LGBTQI+ community in public remarks surrounding the January 2021 protests at Bogazici University and, after a police raid, the university shuttered the LGBTQI+ student club on campus.

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are the only participating States that criminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults. The United States is globally committed to supporting the repeal or elimination of laws that criminalize LGBTQI+ status and/or conduct.

All persons are born equal in dignity and rights. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex rights are human rights—nothing more, nothing less. The human rights of every person must be respected.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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