



The Hague International Model United Nations

Forum: Human Rights Commission 1

Issue: Safeguarding LGBTQ+ Cultural Spaces and Narratives

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Introduction

The issue of safeguarding LGBTQ+ cultural narratives and safe spaces has been discussed by the UN for several decades, leading to no real satisfactory conclusion seeing as, since 1980, 57 countries have *decreased* in their overall acceptance of LGBTQ+ citizens, and an additional 62 have remained stagnant on their position.¹ This poses an immense risk to LGBTQ+ persons throughout the globe, as their lives and livelihoods are being put on the line daily because of the stigmas that surround sexual orientation and gender identities.

There is a phrase which says “History will call them Best Friends”, or similar variants. This phrase refers to the thousands of historical instances in which a non-heteronormative couple was documented, in some capacity, as friends to avoid discussing the romantic relationship which was truly being lived. This stigmatic reaction towards LGBTQ+ relationships has been maintained for centuries. In an age where progress happens faster than any time in history, the lack of progress in addressing the disdain and persecution with which society approaches these individuals is becoming increasingly alarming. The presence of LGBTQ+ safe spaces and narratives, therefore, is becoming more and more necessary as these spaces allow for Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGMs) worldwide to have places in which they are able to exist without fear of persecution.

Definition of Key Terms

Sodomy Laws:

References law made that define certain sexual acts as crimes, often homosexual manners of sexual intercourse.

SOGI:

An acronym for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

SGM:

An acronym used to refer to Sexual and Gender Minorities

Background Information

The consequences of prolonged persecution on Sexual and Gender Minorities

LGBTQ+ citizens are at a distinctly higher risk of developing mental health disorders because of the persecution they face in their daily lives. Research on minority stress-related injuries among Sexual and Gender Minorities (SGMs) is critically low.² However, it has been proven that SGMs suffer more frequently from mental strife due to their sexual and gender orientation. This strife is due to the assorted different forms of persecution and discrimination LGBTQ+ persons face in their everyday lives, including physical and sexual violence, harassment, force conversion attempts, and feeling unsafe in public.

Furthermore, LGBTQ+ persons who have suffered atrocities are often unable or unwilling to report them in fear of the repercussions they may face given the ongoing campaign against their culture and history, which is why the need for preservation of cultural narratives and the creation of safe spaces is crucial.⁵ While there are nations establishing safe havens to rectify this historical trend, often individuals who are impacted would have to relocate from their home, abandon family, and begin entirely anew to receive those benefits.

The Impact of progressive legislative and educational approaches

The primary difference between spaces that are safe for LGBTQ+ persons and not, lies in the legislation within the nation and the cultural stereotypes about SGMs. For example, the Icelandic government, which is frequently revered as very accepting of LGBTQ+ citizens, has multiple pieces of legislation passed allowing for gender autonomy, and a longstanding agreement with the National Queer Association of Iceland that offer education for all LGBTQ+ citizens and their families, on subjects such as Gender Identity and Expression, and Sexual Orientation.³ This education allows for the LGBTQ+ narrative that has been neglected, to be nationally known.



Figure 1
A published image from the French Government depicting Worldwide LGBTQ+ acceptance rates

Additionally, the French government regularly publishes information promoting the spreading of credible information about LGBTQ+ people and rights worldwide (see figure 1.)⁴ Multiple studies, such

as studies, have proven public education is crucial for the continual global destigmatization of SGMs, ultimately establishing France as a safe-space for LGBTQ+ persons.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

UN and International involvement

In the past, several resolutions have been passed, and several NGOs created attempting to safeguard LGTBQ+ cultural spaces and narratives such as, but not limited to:

- The creation of the UN LGBTI Core Group
- Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, 14/07/2011 (A/HRC/RES/17/19)
- The UN Free & Equal Campaign
- Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council on 30 June 2016 - 32/2. Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 15/07/2015, (A/HRC/RES/32/2)
- Elimination of discrimination against women and girls in sports, 04/04/2009, (A/HRC/RES/40/5)
- General Assembly Resolution on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions (EJE).

Every resolution, group made, or speech given in the UN allows for the safeguarding of LGBTQ+ cultural narratives and safe spaces to become more viable, while also bringing the issue into the forefront of international diplomatic focus.

Iceland

As previously mentioned Iceland is revered as one the most accepting countries of LGBTQ+ citizens in the world because of its extensive Pro-LGBTQ+ legislation and general positive attitude towards SGMs. In addition, Iceland fervently promotes public education on LGBTQ+ topics in order to prevent the further development or existence of negative stigmas that are often the breeding ground for hatred, and hate crimes.⁶

Azerbaijan

LGBTQ+ citizens in Azerbaijan, which is regarded as the least accepting country of SGMs, often have to hide their identities, opting to move to bigger cities because of the anonymity they provide. Since the Azerbaijani government has only existed since 1991, the government is still actively developing in all

capacities. This, combined with the still developing school system, and lack of pro-LGBTQ+ legislation, makes Azerbaijan an incredibly unsafe location for SGMs.⁷

Syria

Syria is also regarded as one of the more unsafe nations for LGBTQ+ citizens due to being in a constant state of war since 2011, due to their current civil unrest. The atrocities committed by Syria in times of war, especially against LGBTQ+ persons, are more frequent, more deadly, and leave more lasting effects than those frequently committed by Azerbaijan. Such atrocities include, forced sexual encounters, involuntary sexual examinations, physical torture, execution, and forced conversion treatments that extend vastly beyond the constraints of the law.⁸

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1924	Peru's 1924 Penal Code officially decriminalises private, consensual, same-sex activity, becoming the first nation to do so. ⁹
1994	Toonen V. Australia - Toonen brings a complaint to the Human Rights Committee, ending the last sodomy law in Australia. ¹⁰
1995	Bev Ditsie speaks at the Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, becoming the first openly lesbian woman to ever do so. ¹⁰
2000	Sexual orientation is added to a GA assembly for the first time in the General Assembly Resolution on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions (EJE).
2013	UN Free & Equal Campaign launched by OHCHR.
2016	Independent expert on SOGI mandate position is created.
2022	Rosanna Flamer - Caldera v. Sri Lanka.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Other historical attempts to solve the issue include the implementation of pro LGBTQ+ legislation, local-level lawsuits, the EU Equal Treatment Directive, and Local or international Pro-LGTQ+ non profit

organizations such as equal ground and the Arcus Foundation. As well. The UN has passed several resolutions on the issue such as the “Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity” resolution which was the first to be based on SOGI. As well, the UN has integrated LGBTQ+ narrative discussions into several General Assemblies. All of these are minor, yet necessary steps, that have gotten the world significantly closer to being a global safe space for SGMs.

Possible Solutions

LGBTQ+ legislation:

The implementation of legislation that protects LGBTQ+ persons rights allows for legal protection of SGMs. This, in turn, would allow for more LGBTQ+ related hate crimes to be reported, as the SGMs are able to trust that those who persecuted them will be prosecuted under the new law.

Public education initiatives:

The public education on LGBTQ+ narratives allows for SGMs to feel comfortable in their position, understand the reality of it, while also destigmatizing LGBTQ+ narratives in the nation that this education is present in.

LGBTQ+ destigmatization in the media:

The progressive destigmatization of LGBTQ+ persons in the media allows for society to become more accustomed to their presence, ultimately allowing the public to feel more comfortable with LGBTQ+ narratives, preserving their history for what it truly is rather than what society feels comfortable with.

Endnotes

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