



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **In Observance of Pride Month**

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Tracey Newell  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
June 13, 2024

Every June, the United States commemorates the 1969 uprising at the Stonewall Inn in New York, an event that inspired a global movement toward LGBTQI+ equality and the celebration of Pride Month as we know it today. We applaud the immense contributions that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons have made to our societies. We also condemn the cruelty and injustice they continue to face worldwide. Despite progress towards equality, LGBTQI+ persons in many countries experience danger and discrimination, including laws criminalizing LGBTQI+ persons and their allies, violent attacks, and denial of lifesaving and gender-affirming treatment.

In the OSCE, we recognize that respect for human rights is a prerequisite for lasting security in all participating States. We cannot and will not exclude the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons from this truth. When governments actively target or fail to protect the rights of one specific group, all vulnerable populations are left at greater risk. It is only by acting in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act – which emphasizes the “inherent dignity of the human person” – and safeguarding the rights of all individuals can we ensure that our societies become more secure and prosperous.

Malta has set an example to which we should all aspire, receiving ILGA-Europe’s top ranking for the ninth year in a row thanks to its strong commitment to protecting the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons. In contrast, Russia has increasingly restricted the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals and stigmatized their very existence. Following the November 2023 Russian Supreme Court ruling designating the so-called “international LGBT movement” as extremist, at least three groups supporting LGBTQI+ rights have shut down for fear of prosecution. Regional courts have also sentenced or fined individuals for wearing rainbow colors or posting rainbow flags on social media.

In Azerbaijan, in many cases, authorities have not investigated or punished those responsible for attacks on LGBTQI+ persons, and transgender individuals have been targets of violence. Human rights organizations report that law enforcement bodies in Armenia have also declined to prosecute some cases of violence against LGBTQI+ persons and have even attempted to justify them due to the victims’ sexual orientation or gender identity. In Türkiye, government rhetoric has falsely equated LGBTQI+ persons with terrorism, and growing restrictions on the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association have limited LGBTQI+ organizations’ ability to operate. In Belarus, police have raided LGBTQI+ clubs and detained individuals suspected of identifying as LGBTQI+, forcing them to confess to crimes and state their sexual orientation in public recordings. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan continue to criminalize same-sex sexual relations between men.

Advancing equality for the LGBTQI+ community is a top priority for the United States. President Biden has recommitted us to “do more to support LGBTQI+ rights at home and around the world.” LGBTQI+ rights are human rights. This month and every month, we must ensure that LGBTQI+ individuals can live openly and authentically, without fear of harassment and violence, in all of our societies.

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