

Background information

The abbreviation LGBTQ+ is usually used for describing individuals either of other than heterosexual sexual orientation or for persons not identifying themselves with none of the two most commonly recognized genders: male nor female. To be more precise, the abbreviation stands for: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer.

The movement for LGBTQ+ rights has its roots in the early 20's in the United States, where the first documented social gay rights organization was founded. Despite the activities of similar organizations and loud criticism of certain well-known psychiatrists including Sigmund Freud, the LGBTQ+ still had to face discrimination and sometimes targeted police oppression in the United States or in many European countries. For example, LGBTQ+ persons were banned for serving in the US federal government by a bill passed in 1953 by Dwight Eisenhower. According to the Eisenhower administration, LGBTQ+ individuals represented a major security risk the federal government had to tackle.

In 1969, a gay bar called The Stonewall Inn in New York was raided by the police. This event was a significant milestone in the LGBTQ+ movement history. It led to a riot 400 individuals took part in – nowadays, manifestations commemorating this event are called „The Pride“. As a result of continuing protests, LGBTQ+ political organizations (Lambda Legal in the US or the International Lesbian and Gay association founded in the UK) proliferated in the United States and in certain European countries. During the 70's and 80's, these activist groups successfully achieved an introduction of decriminalizing and anti-discriminatory laws in many western countries. Additionally, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) officially removed homosexuality from the list of mental disorders. This step was followed by the World Health Organization (WHO), which made the same decision in 1990.

However, there is still a significant number of countries with anti-LGBTQ+ targeted laws, including many African and the majority of Middle Eastern states. In certain countries, homosexual intercourse is even punished with death penalty, including Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Afghanistan or Iran. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ individuals also face discrimination in various countries of the world, which despite decriminalization of homosexual activity do not provide any legal protection to these persons.

As a result of these facts, the biggest challenges the LGBTQ+ community worldwide has to deal with might be following: combatting hate crime related to the LGBTQ+ by adopting further anti-discriminatory laws, decriminalization of homosexuality in all countries of the world, securing marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples or promoting the disease prevention of HIV/AIDS.

UN involvement

The United Nations started dealing with the issue of protection of LGBTQ+ rights in 1994, when the Toonen v. Australia complaint was presented to the UNHRC committee, defining

anti-homosexual laws as a clear violation of human rights. In 2006, Norway presented to the General Assembly a proposal for a joint statement against violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity, backed by 58 member states. In 2008, there was another joint statement of a similar message presented by Argentina on behalf of 66 member states, However, this proposal resulted in the states of the Arab League presenting a statement in opposition of LGBTQ+ rights. Any of these two statements has not been adopted by the General Assembly yet.

Additionally, the UNHRC committee adopted a resolution requesting the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to draft a report documenting violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation worldwide in 2011. This was followed by a second UNHRC resolution adopted in 2014 requesting the OHCHR to update his 2011 expertise.

Furthermore, the 2016 mass shooting which targeted visitors of a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, was condemned by the UN Security Council in 2016.

Questions to consider

- Is homosexuality legal in my country?
- Are LGBTQ+ individuals protected by law in my country?
- What position does my country represent concerning same-sex relationships?
- What steps has my country taken so far to tackle homophobia?
- Do transgender people get legal gender recognition in my country?
- Do LGBTQ+ individuals have to face discrimination in my country?
- Does my country see homophobia as a problem or not?

Sources + Useful links

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