



CAMPAIGNING

For human rights since 1978

ILGA is a worldwide network of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisations working for human rights and against sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination.

Issue 118 | Summer 2005

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The Brazilian resolution has died. What now?

RISE, FALL... AND RISE AGAIN!

Neither voted nor discussed at the United Nations, the Brazilian resolution, the first of its kind banning discrimination based on the grounds of sexual orientation died at this year's Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in Geneva. Despite of this glorious but silent fall, the resolution has done a lot of good to the international LGBT movement in general and to ILGA in particular. ILGA came stronger to Geneva this year and invited 27 activists to come and testify at the UN thanks to the support of the Swedish and German Foreign Offices.

ILGA brings 27 activists to the UN and organises four public debates: visibility at its Best!

Visibility for the LGBT movement has always been a key issue and the United Nations is not an exception. For the second year running, 40 to 50 LGBT activists came together in Geneva. Bringing 27 activists from all over the world and holding four panels, ILGA did more than its fair share. Our efforts did not go unnoticed by the media as a crew from the Franco-German TV channel ARTE followed ILGA's team at the UN. As government officials queued to give their condolences to the Vatican representative, our first panel on the relationship between religion and homosexuality made quite an impression. ILGA organised a specific panel on the multiple discriminations suffered by lesbians and Rosanna Flamer Caldera, female co-secretary General of ILGA was invited by the Finnish government to publicly testify on the struggle of Lesbian women in Sri Lanka and around the world. A panel on LGBT rights at the workplace offered the opportunity to gather major trade unions: Public Service International, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and Education International were all present. A debate on transgender issues was another proof of ILGA's commitment to see the gender identity issue properly addressed by a future UN resolution, as agreed upon at our World Conference in Manila. All in all, and with the help of other NGOs, the UN lived two intense weeks of initiatives and debates on sexual orientation and gender identity issues. The plenary session saw as many as ten interventions by LGBT activists. But most importantly, despite the lack of a resolution to discuss, this year, no less than 33 countries stood up for LGBT rights!

We invite you to read our special report with the speeches given by activists on www.ilga.org. On the home page, select "Campaigning" on the left-hand column.

On the difficult relationship of homosexuality and religion

When Brazil introduced its resolution, the Vatican and the Organisation of Islamic conferences strongly opposed it, as if the mere recognition of homosexuality would be an offence to "religion." Alternative views do exist within supposedly "uniform" religious communities. ILGA invited activists from various religious backgrounds to reflect on the often-difficult relationship between homosexuality and religion: from the perspective of a society harshly split by religious communities (Ghassan Makarem/Helem, Lebanon), of indigenous religions opposed to colonizing



ones (Dede Otoemo/Gaya Nusantara, Indonesia), of Judaism (Joël Behmoras/World Congress of LGBT jews, France) and of Christianity. Véronique Souillé (David & Jonathan/France) insisted on the difficult burden on LGBT people who need to re-interpret their faith independently of what Church representatives teach: "God's love is also for us women and men of different sexual orientation and gender expressions." ILGA's first panel was well-attended though some expected to hear religious leaders expressing views from a theological perspective. A debate still to be held.

ILGA Panels at th

Multiple discrimination suffered by Lesbian and bisexual women

Excerpts from the panel:

"There is a perpetuation of low value in assessing who a woman should be: we do not have the same rights whether or not we are heterosexual, and we have a lot of obligations, including controlling men's sexuality. The responsibility of misconduct of most men is blamed on women. In this context it is difficult to be different as a woman." **Dorothy Aken'ova**, Nigeria. **Claudine Ouellet** (Canada) gave an



overview of anti discrimination laws intended as legal tools to protect most vulnerable groups. "The problem of discrimination is about being wrong. That is the real issue about being female: we are the wrong gender, the wrong sex, so discrimination against women starts before birth and preconceived notion of what it is to be female. Feminine and physical attributes are set by social and religious standards". stated **Anna Leah Sarabia** from The Philippines. "Control of women's sexuality has become a fundamentalism in many parts of the world. It is frightening to see that fundamentalists disagree on religion but agree on women's sexuality or controlling any form of conduct that contravenes any social being or cultural norm." **Susana Fried**, USA

Working in Union

"Global trade unions and the LGBT movement form a natural alliance" commented **Kursad Kahramanoglu**, ILGA Secretary General and retired trade unionist. "Trade unions are the most efficiently organized all around the world. In many countries, they even constitute the only form of organization of civil society". **Rebeca Sevilla** from Education International agreed that organizations striving for better quality of public services and education could no longer exclude sexual discrimination from their agenda. But the new alliance's task is easier said than done. Public Services International adopted a resolution to fight for equality in 1993, but "implementing it is another thing", said **Hans Engelberts**, Secretary General of PSI. "It takes courage to come out for this issue. "Within the Brazilian trade unions, dominated by the heterosexual male, minorities are still invisible", said Beto de Jesus. "Although unions of many northern countries now recognize the need to look after LGBT rights, southern countries still lag behind" said Mr. Engelberts. "Our work is promoting to unions that this is an issue for them" declared **Anna Biondi**, of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) before adding that the LGBT movement needs to reflect on its own role. "Sometimes the GL movement can be elitist and does not want to work on blue-collar issues." She pointed at the recent recognition by the European Regional Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO) of the need to root out sexual orientation as a basis for discrimination in access to employment. As the Secretary of ILO's Workers Group, she begged the participants to urge their governments to use it.

"Gender rights are human rights."

"Normalisation and narrow-minded views mean that many countries still punish by law people whose conduct does not conform to their ideas of a binary, man-woman world. But gender and sex can be discordant. They are not unidirectional or bipolar concepts, but represent a continuum along which there are many variants" stated **Deborah Lambillotte**, from Belgium.



The Peruvian **Belissa Andia Perez**, explained how transgender people struggle to fit in society: "we are stereotypically labeled and associated with low social status, STDs and often thought to be mentally ill." **Mauro Cabral**, from Argentina gave a personal account of his experiences as an intersex person as well as an insight of the many legal issues one has to face. Strict categorisation between male and female forces intersex and transgender people to account for their identity in their dealings with administration, in order, for example to change the sex indicated on identity papers. "We must learn to play with the human body, without prejudice or stereotype," said Cabral. The audience showed much interest in the debate confirming Ms Lambillotte's final message: "Gender diversity is just a range of different ways of expressing human gender. We must broaden our minds to gender and sexual expression." Picture: Lorena Espinoza.

"This is not an issue that will go away without receiving proper attention. It must be dealt with according to law. The time has come to begin to do that. It requires only the initiative of a few states, drawn from all regions, to begin discussions"

Chris Sidoti / International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)



ILGA activists met the chairman of the Commission, Ambassador Wibisono.

"The fight against the criminalization of gay men and lesbians stood at the beginning of the more than 100 years-old movement of LGBT people for equality before the law. Indeed it still is our most basic demand today!"

Philipp Braun / LSVD



"We were just amazed of how shamelessly homophobic some of the responses were..."

on the making of a documentary on "how prejudiced are human rights defenders?". ISHR students Caio Fabio Varela, Hudson Tucker and Mark Clifford asked Human rights defenders at the UN their views on LGBT issues.

"Commission members have the opportunity to send a clear message that transgender people should not be arbitrarily killed because of their gender identity"

John Fisher - Arc International

"Statistically, one in 2,500 people are born intersex; the immense majority of these intersex children will suffer from since the very beginning of their lives, invasive and mutilating procedures."

Mauro Cabral/IGLHRC

"Human Rights are for all humans, but we usually do not enjoy these fundamental freedoms, because we are not perceived as having rights or humanity."

Carlos Perera
Sexual Minorities Project under Women's Action for Change / Fiji

"We expect once and for all, the condemnation of all violations of human rights against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people around the world"

Pedro Anibal Paradiso Sottile / Comunidad Homosexual Argentina

33 governments push for a future UN resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity

A PUBLIC STATEMENT BY NEW ZEALAND

Acting as the current EU presidency, Luxembourg “stressed the unacceptability of any discrimination based on sexual orientation,” the opening week of the Commission while New Zealand and 32 other countries made a public statement pushing the Commission to address the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity in a resolution in the near future. The increasing number of Latin American countries in favour of such an initiative was remarkable this year (as was the absence of Brazil who initiated the whole discussion by presenting a resolution of the sort in 2003...). All in all, since 2003, no less than 48 countries have publicly supported a resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity at the UNCHR. Our presence, as representatives of the LGBT movement, remain crucial at the UN to ensure the highest possible visibility and that the due importance is given to the recognition of our rights. The next ILGA World Conference to be held in Geneva next April will take place at the same time as the Commission on Human Rights. Maybe the time will be right then?

It has been sixty years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights first set down that all human beings are equal in dignity, in rights and in freedoms, without distinction of any kind. Over the past decade, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights and the Committee on the Rights of the Child have all found that sexual orientation should be understood to be a status protected against discrimination. And, it has been two years since Brazil first tabled their draft resolution at this Commission seeking to condemn discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Mr Chairman, we deeply regret that this Commission is still not ready to address that resolution today. We cannot ignore the mounting evidence of serious human rights violations against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation, reported by the human rights treaty bodies and the Commission's special procedures. It is beyond any doubt that in all too many parts of the world, individuals are being deprived of their rights to life, to health and to freedom from torture and violence. These human rights violations have been brought to our attention, and we must respond. To remain silent, is to condone some of the worst forms of discrimination.



New Zealand Ambassador, Tim Caughley

Sexual orientation is a fundamental aspect of every individual's identity and an immutable part of self. It is contrary to human dignity to force an individual to change their sexual orientation, or to discriminate against them on this basis. And, it is repugnant for the State to tolerate violence against individuals. All States must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation. We fully support, therefore, the Nordic resolution on Extra-Judicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions that established that killings of individuals because of their sexual orientation is a human rights violation.

Mr Chairman, we recognise that sexuality is a sensitive and complex issue. But, we are not prepared to compromise on the principle that all people are equal in dignity, rights and freedoms. This Commission must uphold the principle of non-discrimination. We urge all States to recognise this common ground and to participate in debate. We hope this Commission will not be silent for too much longer.

NZ Ambassador Tim Caughley spoke on behalf of Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay and Venezuela.