



Response to request for input on report on homelessness and the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing made by the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing

International Lesbian and Gay Association

We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for the opportunity to make this submission in preparation for her report on the intimate link between homelessness and the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing.

Causes of Homelessness

Homelessness is a heightened issue for LGBTI persons compared to the general population. For LGBTI persons, especially LGBTI youth and children, the family may negatively impact their right to adequate housing. While families and communities may play a key role in providing support for its members, discriminatory attitudes within families and communities may also inhibit the ability of its members, especially LGBTI persons, from enjoying the full range of human rights.

Pressure to conform to gender norms and heteronormative standards is strongly enforced in the home and those who deviate from these ideas may become targets of physical or psychological abuse from both members within and individuals outside of the family. A recent report submitted to the Committee against torture emphasizes the dangers that this environment of impunity can have on LGBTI persons by emboldening their family members who feel shamed by the real or perceived LGBTI status of their relatives to resort to violent acts such as honor killings as a means to restore their family's reputation.¹ It is imperative that such abuses are documented in order to create strategies and policies aimed towards eliminating this type of abuse.

Facing such oppression discrimination, and physical & mental violation based on sexual orientation and gender identity in their family and school, it is no surprise that LGBTI youth may quit the family home and their local community to seek a life less intolerable. LGBTI individuals are sometimes excluded from family homes, disinherited, sent to psychiatric institutions, forced to marry, and subjected to attacks on personal reputation.² All this may cause homelessness.

Intersex

Within the LGBTIQ community, intersex youth face specific challenges. In the face of personal shame exacerbated by discrimination and rejection from family members, they may feel neither safe nor welcome in the family home, and either are thrown out or find staying at home intolerable. With no independent resources, intersex persons find themselves homeless. In East Asia, intersex adults who are "outed" in their neighbourhood will sometimes leave their parents' home in order to save "face" for their parents and escape the daily public shame of living openly in the family environment.³

Shelters

When homeless, persons may turn to shelters as a first or last resort. Where emergency shelter services are provided, one challenge for homeless LGBTI youth is to find a shelter that will actually take them in. In the Republic of Korea, for example, in 2015, there are 116 shelters for teenagers in Korea, but LGBTQ teens are facing difficulties with

¹ Living With Fear: Torture and Discrimination Committed Against LGBT Persons in Iraq. Report submitted to the Committee against Torture for its review of Iraq during its 55th Session, held in July 2015. Submitted by The International Women's Human Rights (IWHR) Clinic at the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law, MADRE, The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), and was written in collaboration with local Iraqi women's human rights organizations that wish to remain anonymous.

² A/HRC/29/23 - High Commissioner's Report on discrimination and against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity

³ Information provided by OII-Chinese

entering the shelter because of many reasons: consent from parents is required to enter a shelter, and LGBTQ teens, especially when their parents know their sexual orientation or gender identity, will find it challenging to get such consent.⁴

Moreover, due to the fact that many shelters are run by religious foundation and have rules based on conservative religious values, LGBTQ teenagers find it hard to enter and stay in those shelters. Even in secular shelters, staff often have poor understanding of the specific needs of LGBTIQ persons and seek to ignore the diversity of the youth. This is the case even when there are anti-discrimination clauses in national laws, regulations or policies.

Governments should regulate and monitor youth shelters to protect and support LGBTQ homeless youths under the law.

In the meantime, an LGBTQ youth crisis support center was recently established in Seoul, Republic of Korea to address this issue, providing counseling as well as services and goods for LGBTQ teens in crisis since February 2015. This shelter receives no government funding or other form of support from the government, and there is no visibility of LGBTQ youths' homelessness. Homeless LGBTQ youths may enter into sex work or low-paid irregular jobs in order to sustain themselves.

28 October 2015

⁴ Information provided by Solidarity for LGBT Human Rights of Korea