

**Human Rights Council, 44th session**  
**July 7**

Interactive Dialogue:  
Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Statement by Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights - RFSL

*Delivered by Dr. Julia Ehrt*

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the five partners of the annual Trans Advocacy Week. We thank the Independent Expert on SOGI for his important report on so called “conversion therapy” which pull these gruesome human rights violating practices into light. We complement the mandate holder to have given due consideration to trans persons.

In fact, the few policies and laws that protect LGBT persons from conversion therapy often fall short of addressing the matter comprehensively and leave trans persons un- or weaker protected behind.

Madam President,

While the world health organization has removed homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases in 1990, trans and gender diverse people were classified as mentally disordered until last year. However, many countries of the world keep requiring mental health diagnoses to grant access to legal gender recognition, gender affirming healthcare and its coverage, clearly contradicting human rights standards.

Furthermore, trans and gender diverse people, in particular children and adolescents, are at risk of being forced into “conversion therapies” because of their gender identity and gender expression. Those “therapies”, are administered by a wide range of actors, from medical practitioners to religious exorcists, and include a wide range of practices to “cure” us. Methods include psycho-medical techniques such as degrading physical and psychological examinations, “protective” isolation, denied access to bathrooms, nausea-inducing drugs, antipsychotic medication, physical and psychological punishment and public humiliation. These horrid measures have one goal: forcing us to stop being who we are and stop expressing ourselves. They aim to cancel our very personhood and can amount to torture and ill treatment. They lead to trauma, self-harm, breakdown of self-esteem, the inability to love oneself and increased suicide rates.

Being a trans or gender diverse person is not a pathology; our gender identities are not conditions requiring to be treated or cured. Attempts to change a person’s gender identity and gender expression inflicts harm on the victim and is a serious human rights violation, in particular when administered to groups that require increased protection, such as children and adolescents.

National laws that ban conversion therapy should ban on grounds of sexual orientation AND gender identity and expression. On the contrary, gender diversity is a key step towards gender equality – this should be celebrated – not converted.

I thank you Madame President.