

forbidden colours

REPORT

Undermining Human Rights for LGBTIQ+ Communities

Anti-Rights Threats Within the United Nations



About Forbidden Colours:

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Forbidden Colours is a Brussels-based civil society organization delivering human rights and democracy for LGBTIQ+ people in Europe. The organization focusses specifically on monitoring anti-rights and anti-democracy actors scapegoating the LGBTIQ+ communities. With extensive contacts all over Europe at the political, media, activist and corporate level, the organization has been instrumental in fighting back against anti-LGBTIQ+ initiatives.

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Citation suggestion: Rémy Bonny (2023). Forbidden Colours. Undermining Human Rights for LGBTIQ+ Communities: Anti-Rights Threats Within the United Nations

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INTRODUCTION



Scheduled for November 16-17, 2023, the Political Network of Values is set to host a significant conference at the United Nations' facilities in New York, focusing on the trajectory of the agenda against human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities, as well as discussions on anti-democratic strategies.

In early 2023, the writer of this report convened with forward-thinking political figures from various nations during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) event in at the United Nations (UN) in New York. A common thread of worry among them was the intensifying rhetoric opposing gender and human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities within the UN. This gathering took place shortly after they had observed a speech by Hungary's staunchly conservative President Katalin Novak, who once again echoed the contentious "demographic winter" conspiracy theory. Later that year, she did the same during the UN's General Assembly.

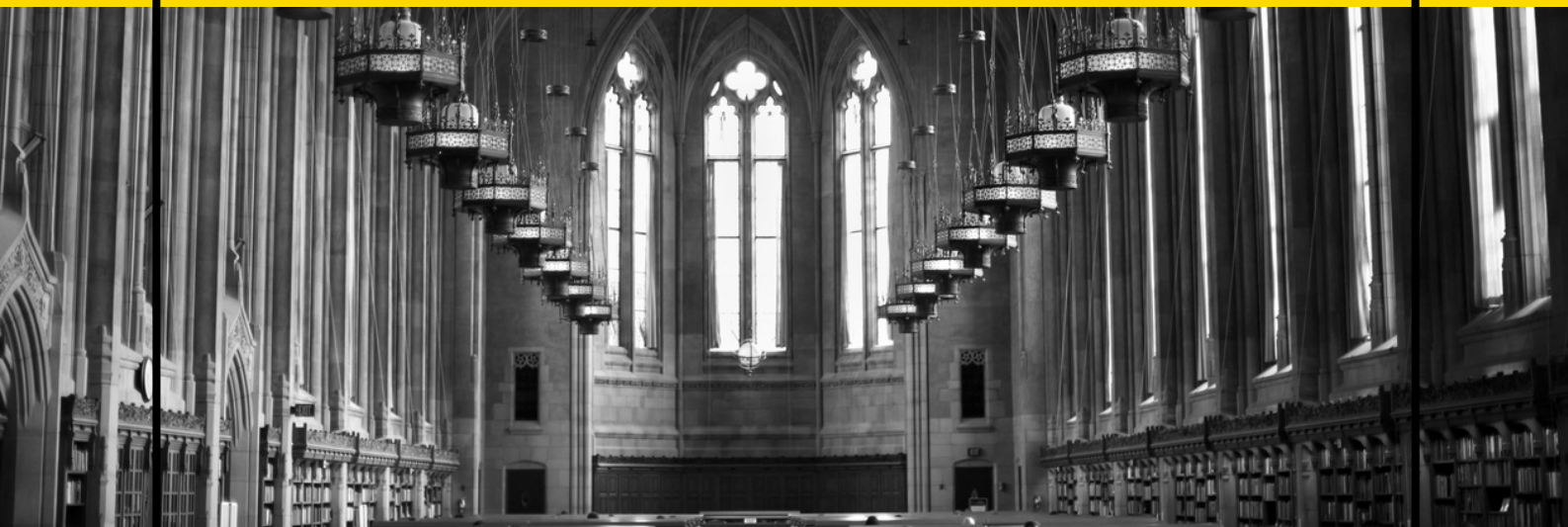
Over the last two decades, we have seen the political engagement of LGBTIQ+ individuals within the broader context of international human rights norms that champion principles of non-discrimination and equality. Fundamental human rights documents such as the UDHR, ICCPR, and CEDAW enshrine the entitlement of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, to fully participate in public life, including the rights to vote, to be elected, and to access public services equitably.

Interpretations by the UN Human Rights Committee extend these rights to encompass sexual orientation, a stance further bolstered by international agreements and directives, including the Yogyakarta Principles and the UN General Assembly Resolution 76/176, which explicitly call for an end to discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons. The UN's commitment to fostering electoral inclusivity and achieving the SDGs, notably SDG 16 and SDG 10, underscores the imperative of building just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. The foundational 'leave no one behind' tenet of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a guiding force to prevent adverse outcomes for marginalized groups, including LGBTIQ+ communities[1].

Nevertheless, there is a noticeable increase in state-sponsored anti-LGBTIQ+ advocacy within UN institutions. This paper delves into the underlying ideological framework and organizational structures that drive anti-LGBTIQ+ advocacy at the United Nations. In examining the ideological framework, the author of this paper explores the theoretical basis and one of the prominent contemporary theologians who challenge LGBTIQ+ inclusive policies at the United Nations. Subsequently, the author sheds light on UN member states that actively support anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiments within UN institutions, along with the network of non-governmental organizations actively engaged in anti-LGBTIQ+ advocacy within the UN.

This paper is founded on an extensive literature review and ongoing monitoring conducted by the author over the past several years. As a result, the paper naturally adopts a qualitative approach and refrains from making any statistical assertions.

IDEOLOGICAL TRIGGERS FOR ANTI-RIGHTS & ANTI-DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT AT THE UN



The anti-rights and anti-democracy movements have identified the United Nations as a key advocacy ground for their anti-LGBTIQ+ stances. This comes while the United Nations progressively developed a framework to promote and protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals and advance gender equality over the last decades.

In this chapter, the events that led to a more active and organized anti-rights and anti-democracy movement within the UN will be discussed. It is important to note that many of these events also entailed advancements in the rights for people belonging to the LGBTIQ+ communities.

Already in 2003, Doris Buss and Didi Herman date one the main anti-gender triggers back to the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt. The conference received a lot of criticism by conservative groups linked to the Vatican to be “too feminist”. Throughout the conference, feminist groups lobbied successfully during the leading-up to the conference to influence the outcomes on abortion in the final conference conclusions.

The UN 4th International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 was a landmark event that marked a significant shift in the approach to population and development issues. The conference concluded that population and development are intrinsically linked, and that empowering women and providing them with more choices regarding their reproductive health is key to achieving sustainable development. The conference also emphasized the importance of education, particularly for girls, and the need to address the social and economic factors that contribute to high fertility rates. The Cairo Programme of Action, which was adopted at the conference, set out a comprehensive framework for addressing population and development issues, with a strong focus on human rights, gender equality, and the empowerment of women. The conference was attended by representatives from 179 countries, as well as numerous NGOs and other stakeholders, and its conclusions have had a lasting impact on the global approach to population and development.

The Vatican revealed a bold statement against it. Moreover, right-wing Christian groups saw this event as a sign to better international coordinate themselves (Buss & Herman, 2003: 60-62). Scholars also see the origins of the World Congress of Families (see chapter ‘Active anti-gender groups within the UN’) in the Christian Right movement (Buss & Herman, 2003: 81-82).

What the two Buss & Herman rightfully pointed out is that at the time of writing, human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities were not yet the focus of the Christian Right movement. Women’s rights – like abortion and contraception – was their primary focus. It was only because domestic partners of the international Christian Right movement, in the West, started to advocate against human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities that there was also an increased focus on it (Buss & Herman, 2003: 121,125). This assumption might have been correct in 2003, but is not anymore Today. Back then, only two countries recognized marriages between same-sex couples, but in the meantime, human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities became in many countries at the center of the political debate. This led to a considerable shift in the focus of the ‘international traditional family values’ movement. While the ‘demands’ of male homosexuals were basically ignored before the start of this decade by the Christian Right,

this is less true for the rights of female identifying people belonging to the LGBTIQ+ communities.

During the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, the Christian groups – like the United Families International (UFI) – took considerable efforts to fight the demands of the ‘lesbian’ communities. It was also unprecedented that they reached out to Muslim countries like Pakistan and Egypt to find support. In 2011 Professor Bob Clifford pointed out that there is a “Baptist-Burqa” alliance and therefore speaks about the “Global Right” instead of the “Christian Right” (Clifford, 2011: 36-37).

The Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, was a landmark event that sought to advance the rights and status of women globally. While the primary focus was on women’s rights, the conference also marked a significant moment for the recognition of human rights for LGBTIQ+ people on the international stage. Although the Beijing Platform for Action, the conference’s main outcome document, did not explicitly mention LGBTIQ+ rights, the event itself provided a platform for LGBTIQ+ activists to raise awareness about the challenges faced by the communities. The conference catalyzed discussions on sexual orientation and gender identity, leading to increased visibility and advocacy for human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities in subsequent international forums. However, it’s worth noting that the explicit inclusion of human rights for LGBTIQ+ people in UN documents remained, and still remains, a contentious issue among member states.

Autocratic governments jumped on this international network of “pro-family” organizations aimed at influencing international decision-making. From the study of ontological security, one must see this as a part of the existential feature of a state. As proven above, the entrance ticket to the international “pro-family” movement is not only for one specific religion or state. Several groups, states, and religions join the campaigns against human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities with several interests. As the next chapter will prove, Russia joined and supports these networks out of a geopolitical autocratic ‘soft power’-reasons.

According to 2023 working paper for the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, UN agencies that focus on sexual and reproductive health, rights, gender equality, and education have expressed concern over the movement’s influence and its coordinated efforts against LGBTIQ+ inclusive policies and frameworks. These agencies include the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS),

World Health Organization (WHO), and UN Women.

This sentiment is also shared in UN forums like the UN General Assembly and World Health Assembly.[2]

The list of UN agencies and programs above are testament to how wide-spread organized anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-gender narratives have become. Besides the conference mentioned above, more recently the inception of UN Women in 2010, coupled with the endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015—particularly the goal dedicated to gender equality—serve as pivotal markers. These milestones illuminate the strategies of anti-rights and anti-democracy movements, especially in their opposition to human rights for the LGBTIQ+ communities.

The subsequent subchapters delve into the primary theoretical framework employed by the anti-democracy and anti-rights movement within the UN to advocate for anti-LGBTIQ+ positions. Additionally, they explore one of the foremost authors and inspirations fueling movements that propagate anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiments.

“Demographic Winter” Theory

Allan Carlson, the founder of the World Congress of Families (see chapter ‘Active anti-gender groups within the UN’), introduced the “Demographic Winter” theory. As articulated by Kathryn Joyce in *The Nation* (2008), this theory presents a somber vision of societal decline, suggesting a subtle yet profound end to “Western Civilization” rather than a cataclysmic event. It is described as “a more austere brand of apocalypse than doomsayers normally trade in, evoking not a nuclear inferno but a quiet and cold blanket of snow in which Western Civilization is purportedly laying itself down to die.” Within this framework, homosexuality is posited as one of the contributing factors to the “demographic winter.”

In 2008, the documentary “Demographic Winter: The Decline of the Human Family” presents a bleak portrayal of declining global birthrates, particularly in affluent Western nations, using cinematic techniques reminiscent of apocalypse films. The film suggests that the root causes of this decline are cultural shifts in family planning, birth control, the sexual revolution, and women’s decisions to limit their fertility. However, beneath the surface, the documentary is deeply influenced by conservative Christian politics, even though it primarily relies on social science arguments. The film subtly promotes a return to “traditional values” and patriarchal family structures as the solution to the demographic

crisis. Despite its academic presentation, the documentary's underlying agenda is largely hidden, presenting a secular veneer over a deeply religious and conservative ideology. The film's perspective is not a neutral examination of demographic concerns but rather a reflection of a specific conservative ideology.[3]

The emphasis on population and demography is strategically leveraged by anti-rights and anti-democracy movements aiming to propagate anti-LGBTIQ+ positions within the United Nations. Various UN programs and agencies offer an ideal platform for these groups to harness the organization's research and advocacy capabilities. Many of these anti-rights factions manipulate the UN's demographic studies to fabricate evidence supporting the "demographic winter" theory[4] [5]. Furthermore, UN conferences and agencies, exemplified by the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population, present opportune arenas for promoting and advancing the "demographic winter" narrative.

Marguerite A. Peeters

Marguerite A. Peeters is known for her "critical" analysis of global governance, particularly in relation to sexual, cultural and ethical issues. She has expressed concerns about the imposition of Western secular values on non-Western cultures, especially in the context of international development and human rights agendas. Peeters emphasizes the importance of respecting cultural and religious diversity and cautions against a one-size-fits-all approach to global norms. She has written extensively on the influence of international organizations and their potential impact on local cultures and traditions. Through her work, Peeters advocates for a dialogue that respects the "sovereignty and identity of local communities" in the face of globalization.

In her book 'Marion-ética: Los "expertos" de la ONU imponen su ley'[6], Peeters presents a perspective on the "global cultural revolution", which she describes as a shift towards a new secular ethics influenced by Western feminist, sexual, and cultural revolutions from the past century. She critiques what she sees as the suppression of "foundational anthropological beliefs" and argues that this new ethics is being imposed on unprepared majorities. While Peeters claims her work is grounded in extensive research, including over 290 analytical reports on multilateral institutions and firsthand accounts from major UN conferences, one might question the depth and breadth of her sources. She asserts that there's a significant lack of understanding about the anthropological changes this revolution brings, leading to apathy and potential future consequences for humanity. The book emphasizes the need for discernment and leadership, particularly as this so-called revolution shifts its focus to developing nations.

In Marguerete Peeters' book "The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution: Key Concepts, Operational Mechanisms," she discusses the globalization of the Western erotic revolution since the 1970s within the United Nations framework. Peeters highlights the role of individuals and organizations in advocating for sexual and reproductive rights, including the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and other NGOs. These groups actively promote radical agendas related to "sexual diversity" and "safe" abortion and have established partnerships with the UN to influence global policies.

Furthermore, Peeters emphasizes how the UN conference process, which began in 1968, played a pivotal role in internationalizing the Western revolutionary agenda. These intergovernmental conferences addressed population and women's issues and were influenced by Western lobbies advocating for population control and gender-related ideologies. Over time, the UN adopted a consensus-building approach, aligning with the goals of these revolutionary agents and leading to the integration of these agendas into the UN's activities. Peeters also discusses 'gender mainstreaming' within the UN, a process that began after the Beijing conference in 1995. This approach aimed to incorporate the gender perspective across the entire UN system and encourage governments to develop "gender-sensitive" policies. Various UN bodies pressured governments to adopt these policies, bypassing the General Assembly in some cases. Peeters argues that the influence of gender experts and activists within the UN has grown significantly, potentially undermining democratic processes and promoting a particular ideological agenda. Additionally, she provides an example of the World Health Organization (WHO) integrating the gender perspective into its operations and working with member states to align their policies with UN norms related to gender and reproductive health[7].

In conclusion, this chapter has shed light on the ideological triggers that have given rise to the anti-rights and anti-democracy movements scapegoating LGBTIQ+ communities within the United Nations (UN). While the UN has progressively developed frameworks to promote and protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals and advance gender equality, it has also become a battleground for anti-rights and anti-democracy movements. These movements have strategically capitalized on events such as the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 to promote their anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-gender agendas. Notably, the "Demographic Winter" theory, introduced by Allan Carlson, has played a significant role in shaping the discourse of these movements within the UN.

Moreover, Marguerite A. Peeters' work has highlighted the challenges posed by the globalization of Western secular values and the potential imposition of these values on non-Western cultures through international development and human rights agendas. She emphasizes the "importance" of respecting cultural and religious diversity and calls for a more "nuanced" and context-sensitive approach to global norms. Peeters' insights serve as a "cautionary reminder of the need to balance" universal human rights with the sovereignty and identity of local communities in the face of globalization. Additionally, the wide-reaching influence of anti-rights and anti-democracy narratives within various UN agencies and programs underscores the importance of continued vigilance and advocacy for the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals and gender equality within the UN framework.

ACTIVE ANTI-RIGHTS GROUPS WITHIN THE UN



The anti-rights and anti-democracy movement is multifaceted, comprising a diverse array of religious organizations, individual activists, NGOs, GONGOs (Government-owned Non-Governmental Organizations), and states led by conservative agendas. Subsequent subchapters will delve into specific United Nations member states that have assumed leadership positions in these movements targeting LGBTIQ+ individuals, as well as the non-governmental organizations actively advocating within this sphere.

The anti-rights and anti-democracy movement is recognized for its transnational structure, with campaigns opposing gender and sexuality diversity and sexual and reproductive rights being part of a global phenomenon. Central to this movement is religion, with influential entities like the Catholic Church, U.S. Christian Right organizations, and Russian oligarchs playing pivotal roles. These entities collaborate with conservative states and stakeholders in Muslim-majority countries, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Notably, the Doha Family Institute, funded by the Qatari government, is an example of their investment in research institutes. Surprisingly, donors from the Global North have inadvertently funded anti-rights organizations in the Global South, as highlighted by Provost (2023) who found that around 75 million USD was channeled to anti-LGBTIQ+ groups in Uganda over a decade. This funding has bolstered conservative political forces globally, leading to policies like Uganda's anti-LGBTIQ+ law. The influence of the US Christian Right, conservative Catholic groups, and the Russian oligarchs is particularly significant due to their substantial funding and stakeholding roles in the anti-gender movement.

Anti-rights states

LGBTIQ+ and gender equality, while gaining prominence in international politics, faces challenges from certain political actors who view the concept of gender as an 'ideology' or even a threat. Notable figures like Jair Bolsonaro, Donald Trump, and Viktor Orban have capitalized on anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiments in their rise to power.

In the subsequent sections, this report will focus on a particular initiative labeled as "anti-gender," with an in-depth examination of the track records of Hungary and the Russian Federation. These two UN member states were chosen due to their notable anti-democratic and anti-gender leadership. Furthermore, both nations have maintained a consistent stance against human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities at the United Nations for over a decade, without experiencing a change in government.

Countries such as Poland and Brazil exemplify a paradox of actively spreading anti-rights narratives while adopting UN guidelines on amongst others gender equality. Despite their overt anti-gender rhetoric and actions, both nations have adopted National Action Plans (NAPs) aligned with the UN's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda. Research suggests that these NAPs, often lacking in depth and commitment, serve more as symbolic gestures to gain international credibility rather than genuine efforts towards gender equality. This trend underscores the complex relationship between domestic anti-gender stances and international policy, revealing a nuanced picture of 'backlash' against

gender equality in global politics[8].

Geneva Consensus Declaration

The Geneva Consensus Declaration, endorsed by approximately 30 governments, many characterized as “illiberal” or authoritarian, claims to present a global stance on women’s rights and health. However, it pointedly omits support for abortion access and upholds traditional family values, thereby challenging



marriage equality for the LGBTIQ+ communities. This declaration, while initiated during the Trump administration, reflects a broader shift in global policy towards a more socially conservative direction. Notable co-sponsors and endorsers of this declaration, such as Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, and Uganda, are among nations criticized for their human rights records, especially concerning women and the LGBTIQ+ communities, as highlighted by the Women, Peace and Security Index from Georgetown University. The emphasis of the document on national sovereignty and its “pro-family” rhetoric has historically been associated with resistance to human rights for the LGBTIQ+ communities. The formulation and promotion of this declaration were predominantly influenced by political appointees, often overshadowing career officials from various governments and representatives from staunchly conservative NGOs[9].

The document, meticulously referencing UN consensus agreements, presents an alternative perspective by groups opposing certain rights, challenging the more liberal interpretations of global human rights institutions. Its inception represents a deliberate collaboration among a diverse coalition of nations, advocating for values they term as “pro-life” and “pro-family” in the international arena[10].

The Geneva Consensus Declaration employs the terminology of the United Nations’ human rights framework to challenge the rights to abortion and family for women and LGBTIQ+ individuals. Within its recitals, the declaration references “preserving human dignity and all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. Formulated on the sidelines of the 2020 World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, the declaration explicitly urges collaboration across the UN system to actualize these universal values, emphasizing the principle that unity yields greater strength[11].

The signing of the Geneva Consensus Declaration led to criticism within the European Parliament. After a written question by

a Member of the European Parliament, the EU's High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell answered: "The EU sees it a key priority to achieve internal coherence on gender equality"[12].

Notably, since its adoption in 2020, Brazil[13], Colombia[14] and the USA[15] withdrew from the declaration, after a change of government.

The Russian Federation

The Russian government's systematic negative stance towards the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals became evident following the 2011 presidential election. Scholars have associated the questions surrounding Vladimir Putin's legitimacy in the election with a surge in anti-Western sentiment and a renewed emphasis on traditional Russian values. Amidst the post-election anti-Kremlin protests, anti-LGBTIQ+ discourse became increasingly prevalent, with both pro- and anti-Kremlin factions employing it as a tool of criticism. This sentiment reached the highest governmental levels, with Putin himself making derogatory comparisons between protest symbols and the LGBTIQ+ communities. The need for an internal enemy, a tactic historically used for power consolidation in the USSR, became evident. With religion, the former internal enemy, gaining power post-communism, the Kremlin sought a new target. By the 2010s, the focus shifted to non-traditionalism, with a specific emphasis on LGBTIQ+ issues by 2011. As Putin faced growing dissent against his re-election, he sought to rally Russians against a common adversary, leading to the state-sponsored LGBTIQ+-phobia that began in earnest in 2013 with the introduction of an anti-propaganda law targeting LGBTIQ+ issues.

This systematic targeting of the LGBTIQ+ communities was not just a domestic policy but also became integral to Russia's foreign policy, especially concerning Europe. Russia's efforts to influence Central and Eastern European countries to resist the advancement of human rights for the LGBTIQ+ communities were seen as a strategy to halt liberal progress within the European Union. The crisis in Ukraine further solidified Russia's stance, linking its internal "enemy" (LGBTIQ+ communities) with its external "enemy" (the West). Billboards in post-Soviet republics, funded by Russian oligarchs close to the Kremlin, equated joining the EU with the endorsement of same-sex marriage. Russia's 2015 de-classified National Security Strategy further underscored the nation's focus on traditional values, emphasizing the importance of "stable demographic development" and the preservation of "traditional Russian spiritual and moral values." Within this framework, non-traditional sexualities and gender identities were viewed as a significant threat to Russia's demographic goals and sovereignty. The promotion

of human rights for the LGBTIQ+ communities by liberal democracies worldwide was perceived as a direct challenge to Russia's national security, leading to a combination of domestic anti-LGBTIQ+ policies and a strategic international approach against these rights.

Within the United Nations Human Rights Council, Russia has actively sought to reshape the discourse on human rights. In 2009, they introduced an initiative titled "Promoting Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms through a Better Understanding of Traditional Values." While initially framed around issues like female genital mutilation, it later became evident that the initiative was also a platform for Russia's opposition to human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities. This stance was further highlighted when many representatives from the Russian Orthodox Church participated in a UN workshop organized around this initiative in 2010. Despite facing criticism from international organizations, including the UN, OSCE, and the Council of Europe, Russia has persisted in its "traditional values" interpretation of human rights conventions. The European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly condemned Russia for its domestic policies against the LGBTIQ+ communities, but Russia appears to dismiss these rulings[16]. As observed by Van Herpen, Russia's efforts to influence the global narrative on human rights have been notably effective, with a discernible shift in the discourse on human rights in recent years[17].

Hungary

The Hungarian government has been widely criticized for its rhetoric against "gender ideology," which it claims undermines traditional values and promotes illegal migration and homosexuality. This stance has manifested in policies that negatively impact women and LGBTIQ+ individuals. In 2020, Hungary banned legal gender recognition for trans and intersex individuals, contradicting international norms. Later, it also banned adoption of children for same-sex couples and introduced a Russia-style anti-propaganda law. The country also prohibited gender studies in state universities in 2018 and introduced the Family Protection Action Plan in 2019, which promotes traditional gender roles and offers incentives for larger families. Following this, Human Rights Watch has raised concerns, with a submission to the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women about Hungary's approach to gender equality and the rights of women and the LGBTIQ+ communities[18].

During the United Nation's General Assembly in September 2023, the President of Hungary Katalin Novak referred to the demographic winter theory. "A large part of the world is facing, in addition to war, a difficulty that is oppressing it from within. In Europe and in many of your countries, the demographic winter

has turned into an ice age”[19]. Earlier in 2023, Novak received a lot of anger after participating in the 2023 edition of CSW in New York[20].

The Hungarian president is widely recognized internationally for her involvement in movements that oppose rights and democracy, particularly targeting the LGBTIQ+ communities. From the moment she became a politician, as State Secretary for Family Affairs in 2014, she had a strong anti-LGBTIQ+ agenda. She organized the World Congress of Families in Budapest in 2017 and has participated as a keynote speaker in several World Congresses of Families over the last decade.

Novak has made Hungary an international leader in the spread of anti-rights and anti-democracy discourse, especially when it comes to anti-LGBTIQ+ stances. Already in 2019, the current President of Hungary organized conferences in Washington D.C.[21] uniting American and Brazilians anti-LGBTIQ+ governmental and non-governmental representatives [22]. Eventually this conference led to the adoption of the Geneva Consensus Declaration.

The rise of anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiments in global politics has been increasingly evident, with leaders capitalizing on these sentiments. Hungary and the Russian Federation, both UN member states, have been particularly notable for their anti-democratic and anti-gender leadership, consistently opposing human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities at the UN. While countries like Poland and Brazil have adopted UN guidelines on gender equality, their actions often contradict these commitments, suggesting a symbolic adoption rather than genuine intent. The Geneva Consensus Declaration, endorsed by around 30 governments, many seen as “illiberal,” challenges rights to abortion and marriage equality for LGBTIQ+ communities, reflecting a global shift towards conservatism. Russia’s systematic anti-LGBTIQ+ stance became prominent post-2011, linking its internal “enemy” with its external “enemy,” the West. Hungary, under the leadership of President Katalin Novak, has also been a significant player in the anti-rights movement, with policies and initiatives that undermine gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights. Both countries have played pivotal roles in reshaping the global discourse on human rights, particularly concerning gender and sexuality.

Anti-rights civil society

World Congress of Families

The World Congress of Families (WCF) is a significant American organization known for its social conservative advocacy, focusing on the protection and promotion of traditional family values. It is perceived differently depending on the viewpoint: some, like the hate preacher Dr. Steve Turley, see it as a bulwark against the liberal forces of globalization, particularly those associated with figures like George Soros. On the other hand, the Human Rights Campaign, a major LGBTIQ+ human rights organization in the USA, labels the WCF as an exporter of hate due to its connections with mainstream conservative organizations and high levels of government in the countries where it operates. While the WCF does not explicitly state anti-LGBTIQ+ stances as its primary mission, it has been reported to significantly influence anti-LGBTIQ+ sentiment and legislation in various regions. Throughout the years, the World Congress of Families evolved to a broader organization, called the International Organization for the Family, which next to WCF also includes a multi-lingual conservative news website (International Family News).

The WCF has a broad international reach, with a workforce that is entirely American but with extensive international links. Initially targeting academics with interests in theories like the 'demographic winter,' the WCF has shifted its focus to policymakers. With an annual budget estimated at \$500,000, sourced from conservative donors worldwide, the WCF's influence is amplified by the combined budget of its partner organizations, which is substantially larger. The organization has particularly strong ties with Russia, where it has been influential since its inception and has been involved in events that align with the Russian government's geopolitical strategies (Bonny, 2019). The WCF has also been active in Hungary, where it has held conferences attended by government officials and has been praised by the Hungarian government for its advocacy of natural family values.

The organization holds radical views on the Biden's foreign policy and the influence it is trying to have through the United Nations. IOF's president Brian S Brown said "It's not enough for US President Joe Biden to push abortion and the radical LGBT agenda on Americans, a country that narrowly elected him. Now, working through the United Nations and other international groups, he's pushing these terrible policies on poor countries where not a single person ever voted for him." (IOF Newsletter, 18/08/2022).

E. Douglas Clark is the organization's full-time Director of UN and International

Policy. He issued a joint statement condemning the US withdrawal from the Geneva Consensus Declaration in name of IOF, and several other ultraconservative organizations across the world[23].

Political Network for Values

The Political Network For Values is an international coalition aimed at fostering cooperation among legislators and political leaders who advocate for conservative family and gender values. It promotes a set of shared principles, including the “protection of human life, traditional marriage, family, religious freedom, and conscience”. Since its inception in 2014, Hungary has been actively involved, with officials like Zoltan Balogh and Katalin Novak, the latter was the vice-chair of the organization, and frequently participated as keynote speakers at its conferences, until she became president of Hungary. The organization has also established connections with politicians throughout the European Union and Latin America, evidenced by its events co-sponsored by the European People’s Party and other conservative entities, and has even hosted a conference inside the European Parliament.

While the Political Network For Values does not have direct ties to the Russian government, many of its leading figures are deeply involved in other conservative organizations such as CitizenGO and the World Congress of Families. The board, comprising native Spanish and English speakers, includes prominent members like WCF’s Brian S. Brown and Ignacio Arsuaga. The organization’s activities, including discussions on the “Institution Of Marriage,” suggest a less confrontational approach towards the LGBTIQ+ communities compared to other conservative groups. Despite the lack of clarity on its ultimate purpose, the involvement of individuals known for their anti-LGBTIQ+ views indicates a probable absence of critical debate on LGBTIQ+ issues within the organization. It appears to serve as a platform for European and (Latin-)American officials to converge on shared Christian values.

Since 2023, the Political Network for Values also became active at the United Nations front. On the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, they are organizing its 5th Transatlantic Summit inside the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. Chilean presidential candidate Jose Antonio Kast (the new chair of the Political Network for Values) and high-level government representatives from Guatemala, Nigeria, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, and Hungary. Guatemala is the member state hosting the event inside the premises of the UN.

Besides government representatives, a lot of non-governmental organizations

will be represented as well, such as Organization of Islamic Cooperation – Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (OIC-IPHRC)[24]. In 2017, the Saudi-based organization published a report justifying the criminalization of homosexuality by Islamic countries[25]. The Wahhabi interpretation of Sharia law in Saudi Arabia equates homosexual acts to adultery, prescribing the same severe punishment of death by stoning. In 2019, Saudi Arabia carried out a mass execution of 37 men for alleged espionage or terrorism; among them, five were also convicted of engaging in same-sex intercourse, with at least one confession reportedly obtained through torture[26].

Starting in 2023, the Political Network for Values has evolved from a conservative group focused on Europe and Latin America into a global network that connects both non-governmental and governmental organizations. This network includes nations like the Dominican Republic, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia, which have laws that criminalize homosexuality, with some even imposing the death penalty for it.

Alliance Defending Freedom International

Alliance Defending Freedom International (ADFI), a faith-based legal advocacy group affiliated with the American Alliance Defending Freedom, operates from Vienna, Austria, and has additional offices in New York and Washington DC. ADFI, holding consultative status with the United Nations ECOSOC, engages in legal actions and policy influence by supporting local organizations and filing third-party interventions with the European Court of Human Rights. Despite the lack of a comprehensive list detailing their interventions, it is known that between 2013 and 2020, ADFI was involved in at least 10 cases concerning gender and human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities, claiming these as victories post-establishment of their Vienna office.

ADFI's legal endeavors include representing the French Fondation Jérôme Lejeune in a high-profile case against the French state at the ECHR, advocating for freedom of expression in the context of a banned commercial about Down syndrome. Similarly, they supported the Slovenian 'pro-life' organization Zavod ŽIVIM in a discrimination case over anti-abortion ads on state-owned buses. While ADFI boasts a broad international presence, claiming offices in countries like Belgium and France, their actual locations and the extent of their operations through independent local legal councils remain to be fully verified[27].

During the 5th Transatlantic Summit by the Political Network of Values, Rachana Chhin ADF International's Legal Counsel for the UN is participating as a speaker. However, Chhin is not the only team member of ADFI. The ADFI's

Director of UN Advocacy is Giorgio Mazzoli. He used to work at The Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations before joining ADFI[28].

Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam)

The Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam) is a U.S.-based anti-LGBTIQ+ organization with consultative status at the UN. It is involved in publishing and promoting research against Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). C-Fam has been active in leveraging its networks and political connections to promote national, regional, and global anti-rights strategies and campaigns. During the Trump administration, C-Fam gained significant access to U.S. policy at the UN[29].

C-Fam is actively engaged in a multi-faceted campaign against Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at the United Nations and other international platforms. C-Fam's activities include advocating to block or restrict CSE and SRHR initiatives, and the organization is known for its strategic recruitment, training, and capacity building of leaders at regional, national, and local levels to propagate its agenda. C-Fam disseminates disinformation about CSE, alleging that it leads to the sexualization of children, encourages promiscuity, and erodes "parental rights." In collaboration with like-minded anti-rights groups, C-Fam works to sway policymakers and promote a hetero-centric, patriarchal concept of the "natural family," while staunchly opposing UN language and measures that advocate for gender equality, diversity, and SRHR.

The hate group, in its consultative role with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, has provided feedback on the future role and organization of the Commission on Population and Development. C-Fam suggests that the Commission's work could be improved by addressing the "imbalance" in its focus, which they claim currently emphasizes sexual and reproductive health to the detriment of other important aspects of the ICPD outcome such as education, infrastructure, and maternal health. They argue that this skewed focus leads to disproportionate funding for fertility reduction initiatives over "essential" health services, sending a disempowering message to women worldwide[30].

C-Fam also recommends that the Commission should not guide Member States but rather provide normative guidance for the UN system, focusing on consensual aspects of the ICPD related to the Sustainable Development Goals. They caution against engaging in "controversial policy debates" that belong to domestic lawmaking. Substantively, they argue the Commission should

concentrate on “neglected areas” of the ICPD agenda and avoid “non-consensual items”. C-Fam says that outcomes should be based on consensus to maintain legitimacy and uphold the principle of equal representation among member states, resisting the proliferation of UN conferences that could dilute or mischaracterize the consensus reached by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, C-Fam’s influence at the UN represents a concerted effort to reshape international discourse and policy on issues of gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights. By advocating for a redirection of the Commission on Population and Development’s focus away from SRHR and CSE, C-Fam seeks to realign global priorities towards areas it deems non-controversial and consensual, potentially undermining the rights and health of LGBTIQ+ individuals and women. Their call for consensus-based outcomes and resistance to “controversial policy debates” may serve to stifle progress on gender equality and diversity, reflecting a broader agenda to reinforce traditional gender roles and hetero-centric norms. C-Fam’s strategic positioning and recommendations aim to influence the UN system and member states, potentially impacting the global agenda on human rights and reproductive health.

The chapter highlighted a concerted effort by certain anti-rights and anti-democracy states and organizations within the United Nations to propagate anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ stances. These actors, driven by ideological convictions, are leveraging their positions to influence international policy and discourse. The report underscores the strategic actions of countries like Hungary and the Russian Federation, which have institutionalized LGBTIQ+ phobia as part of their domestic and foreign policy agendas. Additionally, the Geneva Consensus Declaration and the activities of organizations such as the World Congress of Families, the Political Network for Values, and the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam) illustrate a broader, well-coordinated international movement. These groups exploit UN mechanisms and the language of human rights to advance a regressive agenda that threatens the progress made on gender equality and the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals. The chapter serves as a call to action for the international community to remain vigilant and proactive in countering these anti-rights narratives and ensuring that the UN remains a space for the advancement of all human rights.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS



Over the last decade, the anti-rights and anti-democracy movement targeting the LGBTIQ+ communities have organized themselves better at the level of the United Nations. Their ultimate goal is to change the current inclusive interpretation of the international human rights framework to a narrower, conservative, sovereignty driven interpretation of human rights. They exist out of state and non-state actors who cooperate closely together with some of them more focused on the domestic implementation of anti-LGBTIQ+ policies and others who incorporated their conservative worldview in their geopolitical campaigns.

The upcoming conference hosted by the Political Network of Values at the United Nations in New York is a pivotal event, marking a significant moment in the ongoing discourse surrounding human rights for LGBTIQ+ communities and anti-democratic strategies. Scheduled for November 16-17, 2023, this conference is set against a backdrop of increasing rhetoric within the UN opposing gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights. The support conference like this receive from governments, such as Hungary, leads to the mainstreaming of anti-LGBTIQ+ hate speech and policies within the United Nations framework.

The discussion surrounding the sovereignty within the international human rights framework fundamentally challenges a principal idea of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the notion of universality.

The rise in anti-LGBTIQ+ advocacy by some member states of the United Nations is jeopardizing the open and supportive environment that the UN offers to civil society organizations. These groups depend on this space to highlight issues of discrimination and violations of the human rights principles established by UN member states.

Recommendations

The recommendations provided are organized into three categories: United Nations institutions, UN Member States, and civil society:

United Nations:

- UN institutions should do awareness-raising amongst personnel about the increasing advocacy trend by the anti-rights and anti-democracy movements and states targeting the LGBTIQ+ communities, and how this poses risks to the wider international human rights framework.
- UN institutions should increase its civic engagement of LGBTIQ+ groups on all levels and institutions.
- UN institutions should organize best-practise sharing with member states and civil society on how to defend the international human rights framework for LGBTIQ+ communities.

UN Member States:

- UN member states that are supportive of human rights for LGBTIQ+ people should proactively engage with civil society from across the world, and involve them in their representative work at the UN's human rights bodies.

- UN member states should host civil society organizations defending the rights for LGBTIQ+ communities to organize official meetings/conferences inside the UN buildings.
- UN member states should create a more sustainable financial framework for international and domestic LGBTIQ+ organizations to organize advocacy at the UN.

Civil Society Organizations:

- Domestic civil society organizations should actively engage in human rights advocacy and participate in consultation processes at the UN, like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)'s periodic reviews. This is particularly important for organizations from countries where there is state-sponsored discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals.
- Civil society should stay shedding light to the efforts of state and non-state actors to undermine the international human rights framework while scapegoating LGBTIQ+ communities.

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This report is part of the following Forbidden Colours programme:



United4Diversity is a diverse group of stakeholders with a shared mission aimed at strengthening democratic resilience and ensuring the full access to human rights for all people in Europe. Led by Forbidden Colours, they take actions on establishing a networking platform, coordinating efforts among participants, and raising awareness about the interlinkage between safeguarding the rights of LGBTIQ+ people and democratic resilience. This report contributes to the research and awareness-raising initiatives under the umbrella of United4Diversity.

This report was published on 16 November 2023 in Brussels, Belgium.

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