



HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN



January 25, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

On behalf of forty U.S.-based organizations advocating for human rights, including the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, we write to express deep disappointment at the United States' actions this week in the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committee of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

As you may be aware, both the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), and the Danish national gay and lesbian organization Landsforeningen for Bøsser og Lesbiske (LBL) had applied for consultative status with ECOSOC. The United States abstained on a virtually unprecedented motion to deny these organizations a fair hearing on their application. Still more disturbingly, the United States supported a separate motion to summarily dismiss their applications. The motion to dismiss passed by a vote of 10 to 5 with three abstentions.

Monday's vote represents a reversal of U.S. policy. When ECOSOC voted on ILGA's previous application for consultative status in 2002, the United States joined sixteen other nations in supporting ILGA's application for consultative status.

We hope you will provide the reasons for this reversal. Is it now the policy of the U.S. government to oppose consultative status for all organizations working to promote the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people?

As the State Department's own reporting demonstrates, severe human rights violations based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression take place in many countries around the world. Arbitrary arrest, torture, and extrajudicial killing are common. We are grateful for the State Department's effort to include these incidents in its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. We find it incomprehensible that the U.S. government would recognize these human rights abuses—while denying the people subject to them the right to make their case, alongside other respected human rights organizations, before the U.N. It is, moreover, widely recognized that persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity or expression drives populations vulnerable to HIV/AIDS underground, and contributes substantially to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

As long as human rights abuses against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people occur, it is vital that NGOs working on their behalf are given a place and voice at the United Nations. Applications of three other such organizations are pending before ECOSOC: the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-Europe), Coalition Gaie et Lesbienne du Québec (CGLQ) from Canada, and Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (LSVD) from Germany. We urge you to support these applications. In this week's vote, the U.S. ranged itself on the side of severely repressive governments. As U.S.-based organizations working in the fields of human rights and sexual rights, we are dismayed—and we expect better.

Please reply to Scott Long, Director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch, 350 Fifth Avenue, 34<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10018-3299 (tel: 212-216-1297).

Sincerely,

Advocates for Youth  
Al-Fatiha Foundation for LGBT Muslims  
Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic, Yale Law School  
Amnesty International USA  
Catholics for a Free Choice  
Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)  
Center for Women's Global Leadership  
Colombian Lesbian and Gay Association (COLEGA)  
Congregation Beth Simchat Torah  
Equality Now  
Family Care International  
Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation  
Gay Men's Health Crisis  
Global Rights  
Human Rights Campaign  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigration Equality  
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission  
International Women's Human Rights Clinic, City University of New York School of Law  
Ipas  
Jan Hus Church  
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Latino Commission on AIDS  
L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center  
Legal Momentum  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (New York City)  
MADRE  
Mano a Mano  
Metropolitan Community Churches  
National Black Justice Coalition  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Coalition Building Institute Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Caucus  
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force  
National Center for Lesbian Rights  
New Hampshire Freedom to Marry Coalition  
Open Society Institute  
Queer Progressive Agenda

Queers for Economic Justice  
Sexuality Information and Education Council of the U.S.  
Women's Environment and Development Organization

Cc: The Honorable John Bolton, United Nations Ambassador for the United States  
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar, Chair, United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Ranking Member, United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
The Honorable Henry J. Hyde, Chair, United States House of Representatives International Relations Committee  
The Honorable Tom Lantos, Ranking Member, United States House of Representatives International Relations Committee  
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Chair, United States Senate Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Ranking Member, United States Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs  
The Honorable Frank Wolf, Chair, United States House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice and Commerce and Related Agencies  
The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan, Ranking Member, United States House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice and Commerce and Related Agencies