

Know Your LGBT & Human Rights



LGBT rights are basic human rights. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights.”

Countries have a legal obligation to protect the human rights of LGBT people but many still don't acknowledge the rights, or even the existence, of LGBT individuals, leaving us vulnerable to discrimination, harassment, and violence. The U.N. Human Rights Office has released a [detailed document](#) about the rights of LGBT people and what must be done to protect our basic human rights. Some examples of human rights violations include:

- Execution by the state
- Denial of employment, housing or health services
- Loss of custody of children
- Denial of asylum
- Rape and otherwise torture in detention
- Threats for campaigning for LGBT human rights
- Regular subjection to verbal abuse

International travel

When crossing international borders national security often trumps civil liberties. Border agents are allowed to detain you, interview you, and search your bags. Unfortunately the country you are trying to enter determines your rights not the one you are leaving. Border agents often ask to search phones and electronic devices.

Helpful Travel tips when crossing international borders

- Disable Touch ID on your electronic devices
- Uninstall apps from your phone that could reveal your sexuality or personal information
- Alert a lawyer before going through customs or have a loved one alert them
- If officers inform you that you are under arrest you have the right to speak to a lawyer before answering questions
- Before traveling familiarize yourself with organizations that are working to protect your rights, such as [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#) or [Outright Action International](#)

Criminalization

Homosexuality is still criminalized in 72 countries around the world. Here is a [map](#) of criminalization around the world. Different countries enforce these laws differently and some have severe punishments, even death. Harassment and violence against gay people still occurs in countries where there are no laws against homosexuality. Government authorities often choose to disregard laws or legal protections. Understanding your rights if you are detained or arrested can be helpful but it may not protect you from an authority figure that decides to disregard the law.

The criminalization of HIV-positive people persists around the world. Over 60 countries have criminalized transmission of HIV or failure to disclose one's HIV status. If you are HIV-positive it's helpful to know in which states or countries these laws exist so you can understand your vulnerability. Here is a [link](#) to where HIV criminalization laws exist.

Reporting Human Rights Violations

If your rights are violated it's important to report it. Reporting is a way to give voice to the experience and document what has happened. Gathering an accurate count is a means of helping to prevent future violations.

Here is where you can report such violations: Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
c/o Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,
United Nations at Geneva
8-14 avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
Fax: (+41) 22 917 90 06
E-mail: ie-sogi@ohchr.org or urgent-action@ohchr.org

