



July 5, 2017

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The situation in the Russian republic of Chechnya continues to be extraordinarily dangerous for LGBTQ people. Since news first broke in April, we know that more than 100 gay and bisexual men have been arrested and detained without charge. While some have been set free, reports indicate that many remain in detention, where they have been beaten and tortured; at least three have been killed.

It is imperative that you forcefully raise this issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin when you meet him in Germany at the G-20 summit this week. I urge you to stand with the victims by calling on President Putin to take immediate action to bring the violence to an end and the perpetrators of these horrendous crimes to justice.

Just last week, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution condemning these anti-LGBTQ atrocities, and world leaders from British Prime Minister Theresa May to German Chancellor Angela Merkel have made it clear to President Putin that lawless detentions, arrests, torture, and murders of LGBTQ people are unacceptable. I urge you to speak out and join the international condemnation of these atrocities.

There are reports that at the encouragement of the Chechen government, families have carried out “honor killings” against relatives they think are gay or bisexual, and that those who have fled Chechnya are hardly more secure in places like Moscow, where Chechen authorities can track them down. Women have also begun to come forward with reports of their own mistreatment due to suspicions that they are lesbians or know gay men.

There is simply no safe place in Russia for LGBTQ people. It is therefore greatly disturbing to see recent reports that the U.S. government may be discouraging Russian activists from applying for U.S. visas. It is critical that the U.S. immediately take every possible step to help the victims find their way to safety – and to clearly communicate that the U.S. is pursuing every option, so that the victims do not lose hope.

No door should be shut prematurely. Whether that be through “humanitarian parole,” through the refugee system, or through other countries that can process them more quickly, the U.S. must show leadership in helping people who face grave threats to their fundamental human rights. The people fleeing Chechnya are being persecuted because of who they are or whom they love, and it is our responsibility to step up and protect them from despotic leaders who seek to harm them.

We yet again renew the urgent call for you and Secretary Tillerson to forcefully condemn the atrocities in Chechnya. While Ambassador Haley and the State Department have issued statements, and the House of

Representatives has unanimously condemned the atrocities, it is deeply disappointing and troubling that there has not yet been any statement from the White House.

The U.S. must not step back from its essential role as a human rights leader and as a champion of the world's most vulnerable. Failure to speak out against these atrocities signals to dictators and human rights violators that the U.S. will turn a blind eye to their crimes. We can, and must, serve as a beacon of hope.

I urge you to act now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad Griffin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Chad Griffin
President, Human Rights Campaign
1640 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

cc: The Honorable Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State