



HUMAN  
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To the  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
*Assessing the United Nations Human Rights Council*  
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Good afternoon. My name is David Stacy and I serve as the government affairs director for the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest organization advocating for the civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people. On behalf of the Human Rights Campaign and our nearly 2 million members and supporters nationwide, I submit this testimony regarding the UN Human Rights Council, a body the Human Rights Campaign strongly supports.

#### The Council Has Advanced LGBTQ Human Rights

Over the last several years, the Council has taken historic steps to protect and promote the human rights and dignity of LGBTQ people, starting with its first-ever resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in 2011. That year, behind strong U.S. leadership, the Council passed a South African-proposed resolution requesting the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights report on "discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity." This was the first time a UN body had approved a resolution containing language that affirmed the human rights of LGBTQ specifically. In 2014, the Council passed a similar resolution, this time led by Latin American countries - once again with strong support from the U.S.

These resolutions each called for the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights to deliver reports on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Those reports each detailed violence and discrimination occurring against LGBTQ people in "every region of the world" and called on UN member states to repeal any laws criminalizing same-sex conduct; to investigate and report all incidents of violence against LGBTQ people and

those perceived to be LGBTQ; and to take steps to counter homophobia and transphobia among the general public.

Two years later, the U.S. and other like-minded nations at the Council agreed to appoint an Independent Expert to focus on protecting LGBTQ people from violence and discrimination, the first such position ever created by the UN to deal with LGBTQ issues. The new expert, Prof. Vitit Muntarbhorn of Thailand, has already begun his work, assessing the state of LGBTQ human rights, liaising with LGBTQ advocates and allies around the world and engaging with governments and civil society to make recommendations for combating violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people.

UN member countries have also used the Council as a venue to raise LGBTQ concerns during the Universal Periodic Review process in which each country is subjected to a review of their own human rights practices and laws.

### Abandoning the Council is Counterproductive

At the same time, turning away from the Council will do nothing to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives or the protection of human rights. In fact, we have seen the Council at its worst when the U.S. is not providing leadership, which allows despotic leaders to control the agenda and push their own cynical goals.

While we recognize that the Council has been far from perfect, the U.S. achieves nothing positive by rejecting it and can advance human rights a great deal by continuing to engage and make it the best, most successful body it can be. With the U.S. engaged, the Council has strengthened protections of international human rights, brought a wide array of governments to the table, and provided access for civil society to engage their own governments.

### Conclusion

The UN Human Rights Council has been a crucial body for supporting the human rights of LGBTQ people, and that work is greatly enhanced when the U.S. is fully engaged in its work and provides leadership.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.