

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

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Presidential Memorandum -- International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

SUBJECT: International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons

The struggle to end discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons is a global challenge, and one that is central to the United States commitment to promoting human rights. I am deeply concerned by the violence and discrimination targeting LGBT persons around the world—whether it is passing laws that criminalize LGBT status, beating citizens simply for joining peaceful LGBT pride celebrations, or killing men, women, and children for their perceived sexual orientation. That is why I declared before heads of state gathered at the United Nations, "no country should deny people their rights because of who they love, which is why we must stand up for the rights of gays and lesbians everywhere." Under my Administration, agencies engaged abroad have already begun taking action to promote the fundamental human rights of LGBT persons everywhere. Our deep commitment to advancing the human rights of all people is strengthened when we as the United States bring our tools to bear to vigorously advance this goal.

By this memorandum I am directing all agencies engaged abroad to ensure that U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons. Specifically, I direct the following actions, consistent with applicable law:

Section 1. Combating Criminalization of LGBT Status or Conduct Abroad. Agencies engaged abroad are directed to strengthen existing efforts to effectively combat the criminalization by foreign governments of LGBT status or conduct and to expand efforts to combat discrimination, homophobia, and intolerance on the basis of LGBT status or conduct.

Sec. 2. Protecting Vulnerable LGBT Refugees and Asylum Seekers. Those LGBT persons who seek refuge from violence and persecution face daunting challenges. In order to improve protection for LGBT refugees and asylum seekers at all stages of displacement, the Departments of State and Homeland Security shall enhance their ongoing efforts to ensure that LGBT refugees and asylum seekers have equal access to protection and assistance, particularly in countries of first asylum. In addition, the Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security shall ensure appropriate training is in place so that relevant Federal Government personnel and key partners can effectively address the protection of LGBT refugees and asylum seekers, including by providing to them adequate assistance and ensuring that the

Federal Government has the ability to identify and expedite resettlement of highly vulnerable persons with urgent protection needs.

Sec. 3. Foreign Assistance to Protect Human Rights and Advance Nondiscrimination.

Agencies involved with foreign aid, assistance, and development shall enhance their ongoing efforts to ensure regular Federal Government engagement with governments, citizens, civil society, and the private sector in order to build respect for the human rights of LGBT persons.

Sec. 4. Swift and Meaningful U.S. Responses to Human Rights Abuses of LGBT Persons Abroad.

The Department of State shall lead a standing group, with appropriate interagency representation, to help ensure the Federal Government's swift and meaningful response to serious incidents that threaten the human rights of LGBT persons abroad.

Sec. 5. Engaging International Organizations in the Fight Against LGBT Discrimination.

Multilateral fora and international organizations are key vehicles to promote respect for the human rights of LGBT persons and to bring global attention to LGBT issues. Building on the State Department's leadership in this area, agencies engaged abroad should strengthen the work they have begun and initiate additional efforts in these multilateral fora and organizations to: counter discrimination on the basis of LGBT status; broaden the number of countries willing to support and defend LGBT issues in the multilateral arena; strengthen the role of civil society advocates on behalf of LGBT issues within and through multilateral fora; and strengthen the policies and programming of multilateral institutions on LGBT issues.

Sec. 6. Reporting on Progress. All agencies engaged abroad shall prepare a report within 180 days of the date of this memorandum, and annually thereafter, on their progress toward advancing these initiatives. All such agencies shall submit their reports to the Department of State, which will compile a report on the Federal Government's progress in advancing these initiatives for transmittal to the President.

Sec. 7. Definitions. (a) For the purposes of this memorandum, agencies engaged abroad include the Departments of State, the Treasury, Defense, Justice, Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Export Import Bank, the United States Trade Representative, and such other agencies as the President may designate.

(b) For the purposes of this memorandum, agencies involved with foreign aid, assistance, and development include the Departments of State, the Treasury, Defense, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Homeland Security, the USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Export Import Bank, the United States Trade Representative, and such other agencies as the President may designate.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

The Secretary of State is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

BARACK OBAMA