

## A History of LGBT rights at the UN

A message from the United Nations Human Rights Office

It's the 10th of December 1948 and the UN General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states that *'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.'*

Yet fast forward to 2011, and the UN Human Rights Council expresses grave concern at acts of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. All over the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, or LGBT, people are still being subjected to discrimination and acts of brutal violence, torture, kidnapping, even murder. In 76 countries same-sex relationships are criminalised, in violation of basic rights.

These abuses must end. The tide is turning: since 1990 almost 40 countries have legalised same-sex relationships. Many more have lawfully banned discrimination against LGBT people. More and more countries now recognise the urgency and are pressing for action at the UN. In the past 4 years, this has led to the first adopted UN resolution on the issue, the first official UN report, and the first formal intergovernmental debate at the UN Human Rights Council. On the 26th of July 2013 the UN launched 'Free & Equal', a global campaign designed to raise awareness of homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination, and to help stop millions of LGBT people being abused for being who they are.

We must protect the basic human rights of LGBT people. But it doesn't just require changes in laws and policies; it takes changes in people's hearts and minds. Like the struggle against racism, like the struggle for gender equality, the struggle for LGBT equality will only be won if we join together, if we speak out, if we stand in the defence of the rights of others. The time to do this is now. Together we can stop violence and discrimination against LGBT people; together we can build a world that is free and equal.