



HUMAN
RIGHTS
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INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENSE ACT OF 2014

The Problem

LGBT people around the world continue to face harassment, violence, and bigotry. Eighty-two countries prohibit the public support of the LGBT community or promote homophobia across society. That is equal to more than 40 percent of United Nations Member States. And in seven countries, homosexuality is a crime that is punishable by death.

What is more, the Department of State's annual Human Rights Report has increasingly documented hostility toward LGBT citizens in every region of the world. These violations include murder, rape, torture, death threats, extortion, imprisonment, loss of employment and access to health care, as well as restrictions to freedoms of assembly, press, and speech.

What is the International Human Rights Defense Act of 2014?

The International Human Rights Defense Act of 2014 would build an unprecedented framework into U.S. diplomacy to protect LGBT rights worldwide. The bill would create a Special Envoy within the U.S. State Department who would serve as principle advisor to the Secretary of State on LGBT issues. The Special Envoy would, among other duties, coordinate LGBT policies for all bureaus and offices of the U.S. State Department and in the international programs of other federal agencies; represent the United States in diplomatic matters relevant to the human rights of LGBT people; and work to ensure that the needs of LGBT people seeking resettlement and protection are incorporated into federal government policy.

In addition, the Special Envoy would be responsible for developing and implementing a United States global strategy to prevent and respond to discrimination and violence against LGBT people. And the Special Envoy would be tasked with monitoring and assessing the impact of government programs and policies in advancing LGBT rights abroad. Finally, the bill would require the State Department's Annual Report on Human Rights Practices to include a detailed description of nations that have adopted laws or constitutions that discriminate against LGBT people.

What is the Current Status of the Bill?

International Human Rights Defense Act of 2014 was introduced in the 113th Congress in the Senate by Senator Edward Markey (D-MA) on June 13, 2014.