



# Assistance to LGBTIQ People Around The World

## Canada's Critical Leadership in Defending Human Rights



DIGNITY  
NETWORK  
CANADA

LE RÉSEAU  
DIGNITÉ  
CANADA

The threat to LGBTIQ rights is rising around the world. Authoritarian governments are enacting legislation that criminalizes, marginalizes and physically harms their LGBTIQ citizens. Attacks on LGBTIQ citizens are a breeding ground for further human rights abuses across their society.

Canada has played a key role in protecting global LGBTIQ human rights. But with countries like the United States cancelling their international development funding for LGBTIQ rights, and the global anti-LGBTIQ movement gaining strength, Canada's leadership in fighting for LGBTIQ rights around the world is more important than ever.

### WE CALL ON CANADA TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE BY:

- Increasing funding for the LGBTIQ International Assistance Program to \$25 million per year.
- Increasing support to LGBTIQ refugees through both the Government Assisted Refugee Program and the private blended sponsorship Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program.
- Working with like-minded governments to coordinate a comprehensive strategy to protect global LGBTIQ rights.

In a time where unfortunately around the world there's a backlash struggling against the progress that has been made; in this time Canada will always stand up for the vulnerable and for the equal rights that we cherish.

– Prime Minister Mark Carney, June 10, 2025





## About DNC

Dignity Network Canada (DNC) is a coalition of over 60 Canadian civil society organizations working together to advance SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity & expression, sex characteristics) human rights around the world. DNC includes a diverse spectrum of organizations, from LGBTIQ organizations like Rainbow Railroad and the Enchanté Network, to community organizations like the United Church of Canada and YMCA of Greater Toronto, to international aid organizations such as Oxfam Canada and Amnesty International Canada.

## The Rising Threat

Around the world, the human rights of LGBTIQ people are increasingly under attack. Hate and persecution due to bigotry, misogyny, extremism and disinformation are causing pain and suffering to those who don't conform to sexual and gender norms. Anti-democratic, anti-rights and authoritarian governments are enacting laws stripping away the rights of LGBTIQ people and using LGBTIQ people as scapegoats, which leads to harassment, imprisonment, violent attacks and murder.

These attacks are not isolated. Anti-rights movements around the world are coordinating their activities. They are emboldened, well-resourced, and gaining ground. In Eastern Europe, more and more anti-LGBTIQ laws are emerging, all under the guise of 'protecting family values'. This strategy is being exported worldwide. In Guatemala, legislation was introduced that bans the teaching of so-called 'gender ideology' in schools. In Uzbekistan, an 'LGBT propaganda law' is in development, reportedly inspired by the tweets of US President Donald Trump. The attacks against the LGBTIQ community are a testing ground for authoritarian politics. Governments are employing anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric to justify limits on free expression, civil society, and democratic process. What starts as the targeting of LGBTIQ rights quickly develops into broader restrictions on rights and freedoms for all.



## The Global State of LGBTIQ Persecution

- There are currently 62 countries that criminalize same-sex sexual relations. In seven of these countries, these laws extend to the death penalty.
- In the vast majority of cases, these laws are enforced.
- In 59 countries, LGBTIQ+ communities face legal restrictions on their freedoms of expression.
- Globally, LGBTIQ+ people experience violence and harassment at significantly higher levels than people in general.
- In the last decade, whilst there has been progress towards decriminalization overall, criminalizing laws in most of Africa and parts of Asia have remained broadly stable compared with decriminalization patterns elsewhere.
- At the same time, new and harsher criminalizing laws have also been imposed, introduced, or announced in around a dozen countries.

## Examples of Hate and Violence on the Rise

- In Latin America, in ten countries alone, lethal violence directed towards LGBTIQ+ people takes one life every day.
- A 2024 study in Indonesia found that online hate speech has increased tenfold over the last two years, and disproportionately targets LGBTIQ individuals.
- In 2024, Rainbow Railroad, a Canadian organization that assists in resettling vulnerable LGBTIQ individuals, received over 13,000 requests for assistance from people worldwide. They have seen a steady increase in requests since 2020.

## Examples of Recent Anti-LGBTIQ Laws

- In Uganda, legislation was passed in 2023 that includes the death penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality' and up to 20 years in prison for 'promoting homosexuality'.
- In Iraq, the parliament passed a bill criminalizing same-sex relations, which provides for a sentence of up to 15 years in prison.
- In the Caribbean, discrimination and abuse targeted at the LGBTIQ community is rising and many countries still implement colonial-era anti-LGBT laws. For example, in March 2025, Trinidad's supreme court recriminalized same-sex sexual activity, siding with the government's appeal.
- In Ghana in 2024, lawmakers passed a bill that would impose three years in prison for people identifying as LGBTIQ and five years for forming or funding LGBTIQ groups. After not being signed by Ghana's president before he left office, the bill has now been re-introduced in parliament.
- Italy has begun cracking down on the listing of same-sex parents on their childrens' birth certificates.



## Canada's Track Record

The Government of Canada has long been a leader in supporting LGBTIQ rights around the world. Since launching the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program in 2019, the government has spent \$30 million over 5 years, and supported 50 organizations that deliver critical support – including helping LGBTIQ people find safety from persecution, advocacy training, resources for court challenges, economic opportunity, and legal protection.

The Federal 2SLGBTIQ+ Action Plan, launched in 2022, reaffirmed this commitment. It pledged to build on past investments in international LGBTIQ+ projects and to advance human rights and improve socioeconomic outcomes for LGBTIQ+ people in developing countries. The plan also renews Canada's commitment to the global protection and promotion of LGBTIQ+ rights through diplomacy and advocacy, including in the UN system, regional organizations, and international coalitions.

In its election platform, the Liberal Party committed to increasing funding for the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program from the previously pledged \$10 million to \$12 million annually from 2025 to 2029. This is a welcome step, but one that still represents just 0.15% of Canada's \$8 billion international development budget. A \$2 million annual increase is simply not enough to do Canada's fair share, much less to fill the funding gap left by the United States and meet the scale of the global anti-rights movement.

## Retrenchment in US and Dutch Aid

Since Canada launched the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program in 2019, the global landscape has shifted dramatically. The anti-LGBTIQ movement has grown stronger, more coordinated and better resourced – just as key sources of international support have pulled back.

The United States government – once a key funder of international LGBTIQ programs and supporter of LGBTIQ rights – has reversed course. It has not only withdrawn all of its US\$50 million in annual LGBTIQ development funding, but has increasingly launched attacks on global human rights initiatives, international cooperation, and the international rule of law. At the same time, the Dutch government has enacted sweeping cuts to its official development assistance, further dismantling the global LGBTIQ funding landscape.

According to the Global Philanthropy Project, these two shifts alone have resulted in the withdrawal of more than 25% of all LGBTIQ funding to the Global South and East. With US and Dutch funding withdrawn and violence against LGBTIQ people on the rise, a crisis-level funding gap has emerged. Canada's leadership in protecting human rights is essential at this moment. By increasing its support, Canada can help fill this gap and demonstrate that it's willing to lead in a global coalition of like-minded countries who are prepared to fight for human rights and lead where others will not. A stronger commitment would not only deliver life-saving support, but also signal to like-minded countries that now is the time to act – and that Canada is ready to build a global coalition amid this crisis.





## What Canada Can Do Right Now

The world Canada responded to in 2019 no longer exists. Canada's response must meet the urgency of this moment:

**Increase Funding for the LGBTQ2I International Assistance Program:** We are calling on the government to raise the program's budget to \$25 million per year – about 0.3% of the overall international development budget. This is a relatively modest increase with an outsized impact: it would provide critical support to some of the world's most vulnerable communities and signal to like-minded countries that there are partners who are serious about addressing this global crisis.

**Build a Coordinated International Response:** The global anti-LGBTIQ movement is well-resourced and organized, and our response must be too. Countries must work with like-minded governments to build a coordinated strategy for protecting LGBTIQ rights, and determining what the proper outcomes and actions should be.

**Increasing support to LGBTIQ refugees:** At a time of increasing criminalization and danger for LGBTIQ people around the world, Canada must play a welcoming role for LGBTIQ refugees. Canada should increase support for LGBTIQ refugees through the Government Assisted Refugee Program and the privately blended Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program.

## Acronyms

When we refer to international issues outside of Canada, we use the LGBTIQ acronym as it is widely used internationally and recognizes that Two Spirit is a Canadian term not used by Indigenous people in other parts of the world. For Canadian contexts, we use 2SLGBTIQ. SOGIESC is also a commonly used international term to refer to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.



“ In a time where unfortunately around the world there's a backlash struggling against the progress that has been made; in this time, Canada will always stand up for the vulnerable and for the equal rights that we cherish. Yes, we can take pride in how far we've come, but we should also recognize that there is much more to do.

– Prime Minister Mark Carney

“ The federal government, we are the defender of our charter of rights and freedoms.

– Prime Minister Mark Carney

“ Add additional funding for the LGBTQI+ International Assistance Program to provide support for LGBTQI+ individuals facing persecution abroad, promote global equality, and partner with international organizations. We will also expand the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership.

– Liberal Platform Language

“ Use Canada's G7 Presidency to catalyze action in defence of our values, including working to protect the rules-based international order from those who want to destroy it.

– Liberal Platform Language



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