



UN Human Rights Council makes slow progress for LGBT rights

By [Eesha Pandit](#) | 13: March 2012

Last week, activists from around the world gathered in Geneva for a meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights to discuss global LGBT rights. This convening marked the first time the UN Human Rights Council has focused on human rights, gender identity and sexual orientation. UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, opened the event by saying,

To those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, let me say: You are not alone. Your struggle for an end to violence and discrimination is a shared struggle. Any attack on you is an attack on the universal values the United Nations and I have sworn to defend and uphold. Today, I stand with you ... and I call upon all countries and people to stand with you, too.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, presented the Commission's groundbreaking [report](#) documenting discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against LGBT people. She said:

The story of the United Nations is a story of progress in the fight against discrimination. It is a story that is incomplete, as we continue to work to make good on the promise enshrined in our Universal Declaration: a world where 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Today we all have an opportunity to begin together a new chapter dedicated to ending violence and discrimination against all people, irrespective of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

[Pillay urged countries to ensure that their laws protect their LGBT citizens](#). She pushed for nations to decriminalize of homosexuality which can result in capital punishment in some countries.

But progress is slow going. [76 out of the UN's 192 member countries have explicit laws against homosexuality](#). And [some members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation \(OIC\) staged a walk-out](#). The OIC, an international organisation of 56 Islamic states that includes Turkey, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Nigeria, noted in [a letter to the UN](#) that these countries "have been consistent in their opposition to the consideration of these controversial notions in the context of human right[s]." It also mentioned that the 56 signatories are concerned with "misinterpreting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights... to include such notions that were never articulated or agreed to by the UN membership... [and that] personal behavior and preferences... have nothing to do with fundamental human rights."