

## **Church of Norway's commitment to the human rights of LGBT**

Statement from the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

When Christian faith is used to justify human rights violations, Christian churches have a special responsibility to criticize and contest this. The Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations is deeply worried that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transpersons (LGBT) are dehumanised, and that their rights are under increasing pressure.

The recent tightening of legal frameworks against homosexuality in countries such as Uganda, Nigeria, India, and Russia demonstrate that our fellow human beings in already precarious situations are rendered even more vulnerable. According to the UN, same-sex sexual relations is criminalised in more than 76 countries. Numerous human violations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, such as hate crimes, criminalization of homosexuality, and violating the rights to freedom of assembly, the right to privacy and the right to non-discrimination, have been documented.

All people are created in God's image. This is an expression of a radical view of equality that assumes that all people have the same right to a safe and dignified life. A central part of the church's mission is to protect oppressed people. Any infringement and persecution on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity contradicts our Christian faith. In addition to Christian ethical grounds this is regulated by international law, and all persons are entitled to equal protection of their human rights.

The Church of Norway will therefore continue to highlight and protect human dignity and human rights of people regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. With this in mind, The Church of Norway advisory committee on human rights has developed a report titled "Set the oppressed free! The Church of Norway's commitment to human rights". The Church of Norway Synod in April 2014 will discuss human rights, and rights for LGBT will be one of the topics on the agenda.

The Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations appreciates and recognises the good work that happens in Norwegian networks, civil society organisations and communities to ensure respect for human rights regardless of sexual identity and gender identity. We commend the Norwegian authorities and the Norwegian Association for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people for their international work and collaboration with faith-based organizations.

We encourage Norwegian authorities to continue to work with faith-based organisations to create dialogic processes and meeting spaces that contribute to increase exchange and mutual understanding. Through this we are helping to safeguard the rights of LGBT both nationally and internationally. Through this, we can help ensure that the rights of LGBT are safeguarded both nationally and internationally.

Through our ecumenical and international networks, the Church of Norway will highlight the church's role as a moral duty bearer to ensure that human rights are safeguarded. Churches need to combat stigma, discrimination, and prosecution on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, in church contexts and in society at large, whether in Norway or abroad.

Adopted by the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, Oslo  
27/02/2014