



**Free from Fear:  
LGBT Protections Across the Globe**  
Center on Halsted  
Chicago, Illinois, USA  
March 24-25, 2009

Meeting Report



**Context**

LGBT individuals, activists and organizations face severe security challenges in many countries around the world. Many grassroots LGBT organizations and individuals lack the resources, technical training and personal connections necessary to prevent and respond to threats or human rights violations.

“Free from Fear” was organized to bring together international and grassroots activists and organizations working to advance LGBT rights and protections. Made possible through a generous grant from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, “Free from Fear” aimed to:

1. Present and discuss the experiences, challenges and needs of grassroots LGBT organizations and activists operating in dangerous and oppressive environments;
2. Identify and discuss current global and local efforts to respond to security and protections concerns facing LGBT individuals, activists and organizations in the Global South and East;
3. Provide an opportunity to develop collective strategies and practical coordinated actions that can be implemented to respond to chronic and acute security risks facing LGBT individuals, activists and organizations around the world.

A number of topics were covered during the two-day “Free from Fear” meeting. The tables that follow represent specific threats and security challenges facing LGBT communities in the Global South and East, they identify strategies to address these threats and challenges, and they suggest possible actions to minimize threats/risks and to respond to security situations that may arise.



### Theme 1: Religious Fundamentalism

Problems/Gaps Identified	Strategies	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rise of religious fundamentalist movements pose a threat to LGBT rights movements</li> <li>• Lack of research on this topic</li> <li>• Rising sponsorship of anti-LGBT legislation in the Global South by the US-based religious right</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for proactive (not responsive) strategies to combat effects of religious fundamentalism</li> <li>• Research on religious fundamentalism and its direct impact on the LGBT movement: who, what, where, how, why?</li> <li>• Identify key allies in global religious movements and explore opportunities for collaborative action</li> <li>• Research and document LGBT-affirming religious statements</li> <li>• Create a working dialogue with religious movements in order to humanize each side</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create working group on religious fundamentalism that can focus efforts on addressing this issue</li> <li>• Create cooperation/coalitions on broader issues that can be a common ground against religious fundamentalism: anti-war movements, relief work (ex: Helem, Equal Ground)</li> <li>• Build/strengthen alliances with organizations outside of religious movements that are already working on issues of religious fundamentalism</li> <li>• Draft and circulate LGBT affirming “briefs” on Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and other religions for use by activists (can be informed by PFLAG’s work on this issue)</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to “carve out” local relationships between LGBT communities and local religious institutions (can we find common ground?)</li> <li>• Research fundamentalist funding streams that are fueling anti-LGBT movements (i.e. Church of the Rock in Burundi)</li> <li>• Organize series of roundtables/conferences with queer or LGBT-friendly religious leaders</li> <li>• Identify constructive ways to approach US-based religious groups working against LGBT rights</li> <li>• Act to educate US public that religious fundamentalism leads to persecution in other parts of the world – could build sympathy</li> <li>• Reach out to groups already working with marginalized populations and explore inclusion of SO/GI issues</li> <li>• Monitor and document coverage of religious influence in the press – expose “double discourses”</li> <li>• Devise media campaign specifically “linking” fundamentalist support of anti-LGBT legislation to instances of individual persecution. Focus on persons from global south who have received asylum in the US/Europe/Australia as a result of particularly abhorrent acts of persecution resulting from religious right support in those countries.</li> </ul>

**Theme 2: Security Measures and Emergency Interventions**

<b>Problems/Gaps Identified</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of readily available information laying out practical and legal avenues of escape and temporary or permanent protection.</li> <li>• Lack of emergency intervention procedure for individuals and groups at risk to follow</li> <li>• Lack of coordination between INGOs when reacting to emergency cases</li> <li>• Lack of security preparation/plans among many activists/organizations at risk</li> <li>• Lack of funds for emergency response for non-HR defenders in some global regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help at-risk individuals and groups to develop security measures</li> <li>• Create a protection mechanism to respond to individuals/groups in immediate danger</li> <li>• Improve coordination between INGOs before triggering an international response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize security trainings for LGBT activists/organizations in cooperation with Frontline Defenders (explore opportunities for add-on trainings to existing meetings/conferences – World Outgames/ILGA)</li> <li>• Develop a simplified toolkit/checklist on emergency evacuation for activists/individuals at risk (circulate via SOGI and other channels)</li> <li>• Determine ways in which local/regional actors can be better networked for emergency response and protections support</li> <li>• Coordinate international response and actions in case of emergency by creating a centralized response coordination mechanism</li> <li>• Render asylum &amp; refugee protection information accessible to LGBT communities in general and LGBT activists worldwide in particular. (General information may be Web-resident; information specific to particular areas may be made available on a regional basis)</li> <li>• Develop a list of countries in each global region to which asylum seekers should be directed in case emergency evacuation becomes necessary</li> <li>• Proactively reach out to the diplomatic community in “high-risk” countries to establish agreements for protection of human rights defenders and LGBT individuals at risk (ex: EU Guidelines on HRDs)</li> <li>• Identify local LGBT-supportive lawyers who can be called on in times of crisis</li> <li>• Develop risk matrix for LGBT orgs. – possibly building on Frontline’s materials (<a href="http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/manuals">http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/manuals</a>)</li> <li>• Organize annual coordination meetings (global and regional) to review/analyze emergency response mechanisms – include case studies to analyze successful and failed approaches applied throughout the year</li> </ul>

**Theme 3: Regional/Sub-regional Actors/Implementers**

<b>Problems/Gaps Identified</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INGO interventions that are not coordinated with local actors can cause harm</li> <li>• Local actors send mixed responses to INGOs in situational analysis and requests for assistance</li> <li>• Many nascent activists/organizations lack capacity to secure funding for security and/or emergency response</li> <li>• Transgender issues are often “lumped into” the broader “LGBT” movement, but they demand specific support and protections approaches</li> <li>• Regional LGBT networks could provide more timely and appropriate security/response support to local activists/organizations in danger, but currently lack funding and structure to do so</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catalyze regional and sub-regional protection/support networks</li> <li>• Need to support leadership development opportunities for activists</li> <li>• Research the needs and the possibilities in the region before launching policy and advocacy actions – invest in grassroots community work to build a solid base first</li> <li>• Build the capacity of local NGOs and offer technical support to other activists in their country/region</li> <li>• Encourage sub-regional (“South-South”) exchange around movement mobilization, security, advocacy and other areas</li> <li>• Increase support to regional transgender movements – especially around security planning and protections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out regional and national-level needs assessments with activists and organizations to determine support needs and appropriate mechanisms to provide support (including security/protections)</li> <li>• Developing and fund strong regional and sub-regional support networks to build/support grassroots LGBT movements (including regionally-based grants mechanisms)</li> <li>• Organize regional meetings to develop regional strategies for protections, emergency response and capacity development.</li> <li>• Support multi-regional exchange for the groups to learn from experiences of activists/organizations in other regions</li> <li>• Support regional and international transgender coordination meetings to identify specific support needs (especially around protections) for this population – need to better support trans networks/activists/organizations outside of North America, Europe and Asia (opportunity before/after upcoming ARC dialogue)</li> <li>• Support leadership and capacity development beyond technical intervention areas – i.e. language training, developing writing (proposal writing) skills, public speaking skills to enable activists who may lack formal education (esp. many trans people who have been marginalized from formal education structures)</li> <li>• Structure international intervention in a culturally-sensitive and sustainable manner to minimize “backlash” effects experienced in past women-focused development work</li> <li>• Identify mainstream human rights partners (individuals or organizations) in countries/regions where LGBT activists need additional support</li> <li>• Avoid jumping to policy/advocacy work too quickly – focus on organizational/activist development and community-building first</li> </ul>

**Theme 4: Media**

<b>Problems/Gaps Identified</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media outlets have a strong influence in most countries and play a big role in promoting homophobia</li> <li>• Media are publishing the names of LGBT people subsequently jeopardizing their security</li> <li>• Journalists are ignorant on SO/GI issues and often incite “moral panic” through inaccurate coverage (especially around same-sex marriage issues)</li> <li>• Cases of blatantly false reporting have gone unchecked</li> <li>• Media outlets marginalize and spur antagonism toward LGBTs by implying ties/identity with other marginalized or detested groups (e.g., assertions that LGBTs in Sri Lanka are members of “Jewish conspiracy”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify mechanisms to respond to homophobic journalists</li> <li>• Develop national/regional media outreach strategies to head-off homophobic press coverage</li> <li>• Renew focus on journalistic ethics and legal responsibilities</li> <li>• Improve activist knowledge of journalism rules/laws to facilitate response to homophobic attacks in the media</li> <li>• Develop a way to “re-frame” the debate in some cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research existing international agreements on media ethics and share them with global LGBT activists/organizations</li> <li>• Preemptively reach out to media watchdogs and/or key journalists in countries with a history of homophobic press – highlight ethics and identify key allies</li> <li>• Develop information packets on SO/GI issues that can be distributed to journalists to improve their understanding of SO/GI issues</li> <li>• Develop opportunities for journalist-journalist exchanges – focused on ethics and LGBT issues (ex: utilization of journalists unions)</li> <li>• Leverage international mainstream media to combat homophobic press coverage</li> <li>• Leverage international mechanisms/law on media rules when necessary – i.e. bring homophobic journalists who incite violence to UN or other legal mechanisms</li> </ul>



### **Overall Recommendations**

- Reach out to GFATM, USAID and other global, regional and national-level funding mechanisms to build alliances around LGBT rights/protections (attempt to get buy-in for leverage in times of crisis)
- Develop tools applying recommendations outlined in tables above and making them available to all who require them
- Utilize/attempt to develop relationships with key embassies, especially in countries that are considered to be the most volatile/dangerous. Develop contact lists for times of crisis. Facilitate introduction of local LGBT activists to embassy personnel (esp. Human Rights Officers). Understand and document what support embassies can/will provide in times of crisis.
- Support local activists/organizations in developing security plans/resources
- Connect activists/organizations in volatile/dangerous countries with Frontline Defenders and make them aware of the resources available
- Develop a resource toolkit on LGBT protections and emergency response (preemptive and responsive) that can be easily shared with global activists
- Need to take a stand on sex worker rights
- We need to research what laws (outside those criminalizing sodomy) that are used to target LGBT individuals – vagrancy, loitering, dress code, sex work, etc. Also need to research laws specifically targeting lesbian and transgender populations
- Map out available international response mechanisms to local activists outlining what support is available and from whom
- Develop tools for local activists to use to document human rights abuses – questions to ask, guidelines for soliciting information from traumatized victims, etc.
- Security discussions need significantly increased focus on transgender populations, as they often face the most frequent and severe violence

### **Research Priorities Identified**

- Analysis of internal displacement of LGBT individuals – cause and impact
- Country-level research on laws that can be used to target LGBT individuals (including response strategies)
- Identify patterns of violence focused at LGBT individuals in relevant countries (esp. what leads to “moral panic” and how it can be avoided)
- Monitor HR abuse responses – not just the violations themselves
- Utility and viability of safe houses – is this a successful intervention and can best practices for application be developed
- Religious fundamentalist funding streams fighting against LGBT rights

### **Meeting Feedback/Comments & Recommendations for Next Year**

- General consensus that this should be an annual event
- Increase participation by global grassroots NGOs
- Increase focus/discussion on triggers (i.e. Senegal case). Open space to discuss action that goes against local activists' wishes
- Formalize transgender issues on the agenda and bring more people to speak on these issues –increase engagement from the global trans community
- Dissect what is meant by “international response” and what components/actions fall under this heading
- Initiate web-based follow-up to make more accessible to local activists
- Dedicate time to discussing issues around the press/media – perhaps looking at a case study and developing tools to respond
- Case studies were useful to frame issues/discussion
- Specific session/dialogue on North-South interventions
- Frame debates/discussions in a more actionable way
- Increase focus on women's issues (LGBT used as general term/focus, but there are woman-specific needs that should be discussed)
- Share report and translate into French, Spanish, Arabic for easy dissemination to global activists
- Dedicate time to specific discussion on protections for LGBT sex workers
- Size was good, but not all the international NGOs need to be present – could shift balance to Global South while maintaining number of participants
- Other orgs. should be present: OMCT, FIDH
- Increase participation by funders at next meeting
- Further explore the gap issue of INGO coordination (discussed, but mechanisms to initiate such an initiative were lacking)
- Consider having regional and sub-regional conferences ahead of or as follow-up to this meeting



**CONFERENCE AGENDA**

The purpose of this meeting is to focus on security challenges facing LGBT persons in the global South and East with the goal of developing both a long-term collaborative advocacy strategy and a strong mechanism to respond to emergency situations that may arise.

**March 24, 2009**

TIME	SESSION
9:00-9:30	<p><b>Welcome and Introduction</b>            Sid Mohn, President, Heartland Alliance for Human Needs &amp; Human Rights            Sean Casey, Global Equality Network Coordinator</p>
9:30-10:30	<p><b>Global LGBT Human Rights Violations and Emergencies</b>            Scott Long, Director, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program, Human Rights Watch</p>
10:30-10:45	<p><b>Break</b></p>
10:45-11:45	<p><b>Sri Lanka Case Study and Discussion</b>            Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, Equal Ground, Sri Lanka</p> <p>This discussion will focus on the recent challenges faced by Equal Ground in Sri Lanka following their community outreach activities in the eastern part of the country. Rosanna will discuss Equal Ground's work, the threats that Equal Ground has received, and how the organization is responding to those threats.</p>
11:45-12:45	<p><b>Pakistan Case Study and Discussion</b>            Jawad Qureshi – Pakistan</p> <p>This discussion will focus on the challenges faced by the LBGT community in Pakistan - both socially and legally - some of the celebrated legal cases, and the avenues of public advocacy in a threatening social environment.</p>
12:45-13:30	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
13:30-14:30	<p><b>Nigeria Case Study and Discussion</b>            Olumide Makanjuola, The Independent Project (TIP), Nigeria            Stefano Fabeni, Global Rights, USA</p> <p>This discussion will focus on the recent emergency around House of Rainbow (HOR) and LGBT individuals having their photos published in the press. Olumide will present on the local response coordinated by HOR, TIP and INCREASE and will discuss the local and international coordination challenges that were faced.</p>
14:30-16:30	<p><b>Burundi Case Study and Discussion</b>            Georges Kanuma – ARDHO, Burundi</p> <p>This discussion will focus on the recent success in advocating against proposed legislation that would prohibit same-sex acts in Burundi. Georges will present on the local and international response and on how he and other activists coordinated with international actors to successfully block this legislation in Burundi's Senate. This will also serve as an opportunity to identify action to take on this situation in the future.</p>
16:30-18:00	<p><b>Welcome Reception at the home of Sid Mohn and Michael Tapia</b></p> <p>842 W. Waveland Avenue, just around the corner from the Center on Halsted</p>



March 25, 2009

TIME	SESSION
9:00-11:00	<p><b>Emergency Response Best Practices</b> Caitríona Rice, Frontline Defenders</p> <p>Caitríona will facilitate a session on security and protection and practical measures that human rights defenders can use in order to prevent or minimize security lapses or incidents through analysis and planning; and also introduce strategies for emergency responses to persecution or harassment of LGBT rights defenders at both the national and international level.</p>
11:00-11:15	<b>Break</b>
11:15-12:30	<p><b>Facilitated Discussion: Mapping International and Local Engagement/Response Approaches</b></p> <p>SOGI Litigation Fund (Cary Johnson, IGLHRC)</p> <p>What's in our response arsenal?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embassies - Quiet/Loud Diplomacy</li> <li>• Special Procedures</li> <li>• SOGI listserv</li> <li>• Press</li> <li>• UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)</li> <li>• Emergency refugee/parole channels</li> <li>• Local &amp; regional human rights mechanisms</li> <li>• Emergency evacuation</li> <li>• Local support and solidarity</li> <li>• Emergency funding for LGBT non-activists in danger</li> <li>• Safe houses</li> </ul> <p>What are our "triggers" for international-level response?:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who makes the call when action should be taken?</li> <li>• Dealing with "rogue" activists?</li> <li>• Should a response protocol be defined?</li> <li>• How do we coordinate?</li> <li>• How do we inform local partners of response options?</li> <li>• Project visibility considerations</li> </ul> <p>Should there be a central repository for contacts and/or defined coordination roles?</p>
12:30-13:30	<b>Lunch</b>
13:30-14:30	<p><b>Action Planning Working Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next Steps</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Coordination mechanisms</li> <li>• Institutional alliances – UN, governments, embassies</li> </ul>
14:30-15:30	<b>Post-Group Reflective Discussion</b>
15:30-16:30	<p><b>Wrap Up &amp; Participant Feedback</b> Sid Mohn &amp; Sean Casey</p>



## CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

**Sid Mohn**

(Heartland Alliance, USA)

**Eric Berndt**

(Heartland Alliance, USA)

**Sean Casey**

(Heartland Alliance, USA)

**Matthew French**

(Heartland Alliance, USA)

**Georges Azzi**

(Helem, Lebanon)

**Mark Bromley**

(Council for Global Equality, USA)

**Stefano Fabeni**

(Global Rights, USA)

**Rosanna Flamer-Caldera**

(Equal Ground, Sri Lanka)

**Neil Grungras**

(ORAM - Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration, USA)

**Hasna Hena**

(Shawprova, Bangladesh)

**Andres Ignacio Rivera**

(Hombres Trans de Chile, Chile)

**Cary Johnson**

(IGLHRC, USA)

**Georges Kanuma**

(Association pour le Respect et les Droits des Homosexuels, Burundi)

**Akim Adé Larcher**

(United & Strong Inc., St. Lucia; Egale, Canada)

**Jason McFarlane**

(J-FLAG, Jamaica)

**Scott Long**

(Human Rights Watch, USA)

**Olumide Makanjuola**

(The Independent Project, Nigeria)

**Rasha Mounneh**

(Human Rights Watch, USA)

**Jawad Qureshi**

(Pakistan)

**Caitríona Rice**

(Frontline Defenders, Ireland)

**Kate Sheill**

(Amnesty International, UK)

**Carla Sutherland**

(Arcus Foundation, USA)

**Gisela Thater**

(UNHCR, Switzerland)

**Kim Vance**

(Arc International, Canada/Switzerland)



**Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights and the Global Equality Network:**

Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights is a non-profit service-based human rights organization founded in 1888 and headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. As the largest human rights organization in the U.S., Heartland Alliance recognizes that international programming is part and parcel of doing work in a globalizing world. For more than 100 years, Heartland Alliance has been working with globally displaced persons, which has connected Heartland to diaspora communities as well as to groups in their countries of origin.

Since 2008, Heartland Alliance has collaborated with international LGBT organizations through the Global Equality Network (GEN), an initiative to invest in grassroots LGBT civil-society in global areas where LGBT populations face extreme oppression or danger. Through GEN, Heartland Alliance is working with and supporting LGBT activists and organizations in Central America, West Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

\*For more information on GEN, please visit:

<http://www.heartlandalliance.org/whatwedo/our-programs/directory/global-equality-network.html>