



**International Day
against
HOMOPHOBIA
& TRANSPHOBIA**



MEDIA BRIEFING



MEDIA RELEASE

2009 International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia sees actions on all continents

The fifth International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, an initiative launched on May 17th 2005 by activist Louis-Georges Tin, saw an amazing outburst of activities around the world. The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) Committee reports on its global site www.idahomophobia.org.

« Actions were reported in more than 50 countries », said Joel Bedos, coordinator of the IDAHO Committee, the NGO promoting the Day worldwide. « This shows just how strong the global movement is ».

ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, a world-wide network of national and local groups, with more than 700 member organizations from every continent and representing 110 countries, has been involved in the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia with the IDAHO Committee since it was launched in 2005. « We chose this Day – say Gloria Careaga and Renato Sabbadini, ILGA's Co-Secretaries General – to launch the third edition of the World Report on State Sponsored Homophobia¹. With this report ILGA wants to name and shame the States which at the end of the first decade of the 21st century still treat their LGBTI citizens like lesser persons, unworthy of consideration. The actions undertaken by activists and the majority of our members all around the world on the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia have been an important occasion to remind civil societies and Governments of the situation of lesbians and gays in 80 Countries in the world, where homosexuality is considered a crime and of the fact that in 5 of them, i.e. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Mauritania and Yemen, homosexuals risk the death penalty. ILGA is now working on a State sponsored transphobia report, which we hope to publish by November this year. »

Nicolai Alexeyev, organiser of Slavic Pride in Moscow, speaking after his release from a Russian jail said « we launched the first Moscow pride and the first IDAHO international conference in 2006 with Louis-Georges Tin, who was with us, on the streets confronting homophobic attacks. Since then, we have always been together, working for equal rights in the world. The IDAHO breaks down isolation, makes people feel stronger, and sends a powerful signal to all homophobes and transphobes around the world that they are facing not just a handful of activists but millions of people across the globe.»

This ambition to get activists in different countries together is Joel Bedos' main driving force. « This year we have got a really large alliance of major regional and international NGOs, including ILGA's Trans secretariat of course, together to launch a large international campaign against Transphobia. The appeal has been signed by 300 organizations in more than 75 countries, 3 Nobel Prize winners and many international institutions and celebrities and we are now launching it on our websites for citizens all over the world to join in ».

Most amazingly, this campaign already has led France to announce a historic decision to become the first country in the world to stop classifying Trans people as « mentally disordered », as the World Health Organisation's guidelines still demand. Also, on May 15th, the Dutch parliament organised a conference on LGBTI rights, celebrating the IDAHO, and the Dutch minister of foreign affairs, Maxime Verhagen announced that the Government will change the law that still requires transgender people to undergo irreversible surgery before granting them a new identification document. He acknowledged that the current law violates principle 18 of the Yogyakarta principle: the right to be protected from medical abuses.

¹ The report, presented on Saturday 16 May at the Axel hotel in Barcelona with the help of Coordinadora Gai Lesbiana and former ILGA co-Secretary General Jordi Petit, was prepared by Daniel Ottosson. The report and a map showing the results of the study at a glance can be accessed on www.ilga.org.

“Such an international campaign is one of the added values of the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia and we are glad that the IDAHO Committee has provided the initial impulse. It has galvanised us into action and helped us to network with other Trans organisations in other countries. We are definitely stronger together” says Liesl Theron from Gender Dynamix, a South African Human Rights organization promoting freedom of expression of gender identity in Africa.

The IDAHO committee hopes that the Campaign against Transphobia will be just as successful as the one that it launched back in 2006 when an international petition calling “for a universal decriminalisation of homosexuality” drew incredible support from several Nobel prize winners, many high profile politicians, actors, intellectuals, etc, and contributed to the French government taking the initiative that resulted in last year UN Statement on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity –a historical achievement indeed.

On this year’s International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, the French, Dutch and Norwegian governments organised a World Congress to follow up on this Statement, with a very active participation of the IDAHO Committee along other civil society actors. This congress got many activists from all over the world to meet and strategize the future.

Getting people around the globe together is indeed a shared passion. Kenneth Tan, founder of the first social gay and lesbian network Gays.com, is a happy man: « The community based video that we did this year in partnership with the IDAHO Committee has already been watched by 200 000 people. The idea was to get individuals from a lot of different countries to come out and say they were proud. The result is exactly what the Day means: a celebration of both diversity, because we are all unique, and unity, because there is something that links us all together»

Diversity is certainly the motto: In mainland China, a bike rally celebrated the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, while in Hong Kong, the IDAHO Coalition protested against homophobia in front of the Government Headquarters. Says Connie Chan, who has been coordinating actions in Hong Kong for many years: « The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia Committee and participating organisations around the world have given us inspiration and momentum for action. »

Derek Lennard, IDAHO-UK Coordinator said “In the UK we now have over 100 events and initiatives to mark IDAHO –in 2005 we had five. It is very exciting to see this network get bigger and bigger and to see the very broad support it now receives in the UK”.

While marchers took it to the streets in all major Turkish cities, UK police stations flew the rainbow flag. While in Cameroon, brave activists faced the hostile crowd on a radio programme, a Church service to mark IDAHO was held in Belfast’s oldest church. Iran’s gay students wrote an open letter to the Students’ Union, and in Singapore, the Pink Dot festival was the first-ever event to speak openly about gay and lesbian rights.

The Council of the EU, in a historic statement published on May 17th, declared “Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is incompatible with the basic principles on which the UE is founded”. In a surprisingly progressive move, this Statement was supported by countries outside the EU such as Turkey and Ukraine.

« Everywhere we see things moving. Even in Russia where the IDAHO Committee co-organised the first Pride in 2006, things will change. This is why we created this Day in 2005 and we are so happy to see all these actions take place around the globe. We hope that the sum of all these individual energies will increasingly be visible to the world. Because we are so many and so full of hope and energy, that we can really change the world» says Louis-Georges Tin.

Press contact

Louis-Georges Tin
IDAHO Committee

+33 (0) 6 19 45 45 52

lgtin@idahomophobia.org

2009 International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

A FEW EXAMPLES...

CHINA & HONG KONG • "Love is not a crime, hate is not a family value" chanted IDAHO coalition marchers as they headed to the Governments Headquarters demanding equal rights for LGBT people.



They called for legislation outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation and for same-sex couples to be included in the law on domestic violence. Spokesperson Connie Chan reports : "Protesters laid down in a symbolic die-in action to signal their disappointment at the treatment they get from the Hong Kong authorities."

In the meantime in Beijing, organisations Common Language and Aibai Culture and Education Center organised "Rainbow in Motion", the Beijing Multi-campus Bike Ride to celebrate gay pride, raise awareness of LGBT rights and introduce IDAHO to the LGBT community and general public of mainland China.

FRANCE • In France, hundreds of events were organised all over the country, where IDAHO enjoys a growing visibility. In Paris, Trans People from all over the world joined French Trans activists and LGBT organisations to "Shout Out against Transphobia". On that day, the Health minister announced that France would be the first country to officially stop applying WHO classification of Trans People as "mentally disordered". 27 cities organised debates, film screenings, parties, exhibitions and other political and cultural events, including a National Conference on Transgender and Transexual issues at the French Parliament.



TURKEY • Hundreds of people marched in Ankara and other major cities in the country for LGBT rights. Homophobia and Transphobia have risen dramatically over the last year with dozens of people brutally murdered and police harassment is growing.

UK • Amongst many initiatives across the country, dozens of police stations raised a gay rights banner to mark a day of action against homophobia. The organisations raising the rainbow flag high were taking part in [The Lesbian and Gay Foundation's](#) "Flying the Flag" campaign.

In London, an IDAHO party launched Day in Hand community project. This campaign's aim is to inspire and support same-sex couples who want to hold their partner's hand in public.

www.adayinhand.com



ILGA • The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association published on IDAHO the third edition of its report on State Sponsored Homophobia. The report surveys legislations criminalising consensual sexual acts between persons of the same sex in private over the age of consent in all countries in the World. With this report ILGA wants to name and



shame the States which at the end of the first decade of the 21st century still treat their LGBTI citizens like lesser persons, unworthy of consideration.

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A FEW EXAMPLES...

EUROPEAN UNION • To mark the IDAHO, the European Union issued a strong statement calling for renewed mobilisation against homophobia and transphobia.



The Statement, warning that "discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity is incompatible with the basic principles on which the UE is founded", was also supported by other States, including Turkey and Ukraine, two countries who did not sign up to the UN Statement last December supported by now 67 countries and calling States to fight discrimination on these grounds.

www.consilium.europa.eu

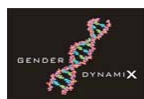
RUSSIA • Once again Gayrussia tried to organise a Pride march in Moscow on IDAHO. This year, the date coincided with the Eurovision song contest in the Russian capital, which drew increased media attention on the event. In spite of much public attention and support, Moscow authorities cracked down on demonstrators and arrested many members of the group. Gayrussia founder Nicolai Alexeyev promised to hold on to the slogan "Gay Equality ; no Compromise" and plans actions for IDAHO 2010.



SINGAPORE • IDAHO 2009 went down in History as the Pink Dot festival united a 2500-strong crowd celebrating the freedom to love. The organisers of the event, pinkdot.sg, say the event was held to commemorate love in all forms and between people of every orientation. The city-state still has a ban on homosexual sex that has been in force since its colonial days under the British. According to Jack Soh of pinkdot.sg, "it was not a protest or a political rally. The event was for Singaporeans in general - to affirm our respect for diversity and the freedom to love, regardless of sexual orientation." <http://www.pinkdot.sg>



TRANSPHOBIA • 300 organisations from 75 countries, 3 Nobel Prize winners and intellectuals, artists, politicians from many countries supported the International Appeal against



Transphobia and for the Respect of Gender Identity launched by a group of large regional and international Human Rights and LGBT Rights organisations. The Appeal was launched on the eve of IDAHO and is now opened to signatures by the public.

INTERNATIONAL • To coincide with IDAHO, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted the World Congress on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. This congress originated from a joint decision by the French, Dutch and Norwegian Governments. Its aim was to reflect on future strategies to take the LGBT agenda forward within the UN. Ministers from 15 countries, including 3 African countries, and more than 80 representatives from NGOs from all World regions debated during the day-long congress to elaborate recommendations for all stakeholders.



International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In August 2004, Louis-Georges Tin, a French university lecturer, campaigner for Black and LGBT Rights and chief editor of the « Dictionary of Homophobia », launched an appeal « For a universal recognition of the International Day Against Homophobia » (IDAHO). He proposed that this day be fixed on May 17th, to commemorate the World Health Organisation decision to remove homosexuality from the list of mental disorders.

By May 17th 2005, as a result of a year long campaigning effort, 24000 people worldwide and reputed international organisations like ILGA, IGLHRC, the World Congress of LGBT Jews, the Coalition of African lesbians, to name but a few, had signed the IDAHO appeal. In May 2005 already, the IDAHO saw some action take place in more than 40 countries in the world. The first LGBT events ever were organised in Congo, China, Bulgaria. Josepp Borrell, President of the European Parliament made a statement supporting the IDAHO and invited Tin to the conference the EU Parliament organised for IDAHO 2006.

By that time a new campaign had been launched by the IDAHO Committee calling « For a universal decriminalisation of homosexuality » and on May 17th 2006 it had attracted support from several Nobel Prize winners (Desmond Tutu, Amartya Sen, Elfriede Jelinek, Dario Fo, José Saramago), artists (Meryl Streep, Cindy Lauper, Elton John, David Bowie), intellectuals (Noam Chomsky, Judith Butler, Bernard-Henri Lévy), NGOs (ILGA, FIDH), politicians, etc...

In July 2006, the Montreal Conference on LGBT Human Rights, organised in the wake of the Outgames, included in its final declaration a strong recommendation to all Governments to recognise May 17th as the International Day against Homophobia.

For IDAHO 2007, the IDAHO committee and Gayrussia co-organised the first GayPride in Moscow, preceded by an International IDAHO conference that brought together many activist, organisations and politicians from around Europe and North America.

At that time, IDAHO had been officially recognised by the EU Parliament, Belgium, the UK and Mexico and organisations in more than 50 countries in the world celebrated the IDAHO. Costa Rica, the Netherlands and Luxemburg soon joined the list of countries officially recognising the Day.

On IDAHO 2008 as a result of the actions coordinated by the IDAHO committee, the French Government also recognised IDAHO. Rama Yade, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights, announced France's intention to launch a UN initiative towards the universal decriminalisation of homosexuality.

During the second semester, Civil Society organisations including the IDAHO committee, ILGA, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, ARC international, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and many other groups from the global South and East worked towards this initiative that eventually resulted in the December 2008 UN Statement read at the General Assembly by Argentina and supported by now 67 countries. This UN Statement was one of the elements in a long strategy of LGBT advocacy at the UN, a strategy that was discussed on IDAHO 2009 at the World Congress against Homophobia and Transphobia, that the IDAHO committee, as part of a central working group, helped shaping.