



**The UN Human Rights Council Interactive Dialogue with
The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief
Statement by the International Lesbian and Gay Association
in partnership with Muslims for Progressive Values
Tuesday 10 March 2015**



Mr President

We warmly welcome this timely report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief on “Preventing Violence in the Name of Religion”.

Violence carried out in the name of religion against LGBTI individuals on the basis of their *actual or perceived* sexual orientation or gender identity takes place in all regions.

In December last year, for example, members of North Carolina (USA) church were indicted with kidnapping and assaulting a gay parishioner after a prayer service. The members spent two hours attacking him as they tried to cure him of 'homosexual demons.'

More recently the world has witnessed brutal murders of allegedly gay men by the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. A blindfolded man believed to be in his 20s was dragged to the top of a seven-story building and thrown off. This failed to end his life and so his community stoned him to death.

Sadly more examples could be given of violent acts against LGBTI persons around the world carried out in the name of religion. This flies in the face of the non-violent principle on which all religions are in agreement: “love thy neighbor as thyself”.

Mr President,

States and others have a responsibility to take action to prevent these acts from occurring, Some would perhaps argue that protecting LGBTI persons is in conflict with their culture or religion. However, as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action affirms, “it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Mr President,

We welcome the findings and recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur. We also recommend the creation and dissemination of religious and educational content and curricula that counter extremist narratives that incite violence in the name of religion, and we call on support from States to fund such initiatives; particularly innovative educational materials that counter messages of intolerance and hate that have dominated the Internet and particularly social media spaces.

We also recommend that media outlets offer adequate attention to tolerant, empathetic, and socially inclusive religious voices that build bridges and collaborate with other faith, inter-faith, non-faith organizations and across various communities.

And finally we recommend the creation of more forums and initiatives to convene progressive religious leaders who counter messages of hate and intolerance toward women, religious minorities, the LGBTI community and others under the auspices of the UN, including but not limited to policy processes and awareness campaigns.

Thank you Mr President.