

Talking points for the CCPCJ Thematic Discussions

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Today, I stand before you not just as a representative of one of the 64+ countries that persistently criminalize and stigmatize consensual same-sex relations and gender diversity, but as a voice for countless individuals around the world who still fight for their basic human rights. Our legal systems are marred by a colonial legacy, further fortified by prejudicial modern narratives. I proudly represent Outright International, Outright is dedicated to working with partners around the globe to strengthen the capacity of the LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer) human rights movement.

The crux of our discussion today centers on the "rule of law," a concept rooted in the principles of equal treatment and dignity before the law. While it has long been the bedrock of due process, accountability, and legal equality, it is crucial to recognize that in numerous countries, LGBTIQ individuals continue to face criminalization, stigma, and discrimination entrenched in formal legal systems and societal prejudice.

This creates legal and social structures that strip individuals of their dignity and equality, building insurmountable barriers to accessing justice. Decriminalization and the arduous journey toward creating safer, enabling environments are pivotal aspects of the "rule of law." Without these fundamental elements, true equality remains elusive, a chain of mistrust is in its stead.

Across the globe, LGBTIQ community members grapple with the constant threat of arrest, detention, and abuse simply for existing. Even in countries that do not explicitly criminalize queerness, stigma and prejudice are wielded as weapons to shield perpetrators from accountability and justice.

In one country, where Parliament is currently contemplating an anti-LGBTIQ bill that would criminalize simply existing as a queer person, LGBTIQ assault victims can't count on the police for support. When six men beat up Soloman, a transgender woman, in 2021, she went to report the crime. She told Outright: "The police took my statement, but they started asking me, 'Are you gay? Are you gay? We're going to lock you!' I was shivering [with fear]. I left the police station." In a second, an activist told Outright about the case of a queer person who experienced severe intimate partner violence but was afraid to seek help even from medical institutions, because hospitals sometimes report domestic violence cases to the police. These are examples from different parts of the globe.

Laws are weaponized to harass, stalk, and invade the homes of LGBTIQ individuals, dissuading them from reporting crimes—a phenomenon witnessed worldwide, in times of both peace and conflict.

In conclusion, I leave you with this sobering thought: our LGBTIQ siblings continue to fall through the gaping cracks in the foundation of the rule of law and equality. Until discriminatory

laws are abolished, and the heavy shroud of stigma is lifted, LGBTIQ individuals will continue to pay the price for justice with their lives, freedoms, and their dignity. It is our moral imperative to stand together and demand a world where the "rule of law" applies to all. Thank you.