

# FRANCE & THE SUPPORT FUND

## FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY



International Day  
against  
HOMOPHOBIA  
& TRANSPHOBIA

Over 80 countries prohibit sexual relations between people of the same sex, which carry various penalties and are even punishable by death in seven countries. **Discriminatory laws**, restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to health are common, including in countries where homosexuality or transidentity is not a criminal offence, as well as **cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, arbitrary detention, torture and extrajudicial executions** which also affect defenders of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.



Since 2005, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) has focused public opinion on homophobia and transphobia issues through conferences, demonstrations and artistic events. The date of 17 May was chosen to commemorate the World Health Organization (WHO)'s decision in 1990 to remove homosexuality from the list of mental disorders. Launched in 2005 and coordinated internationally by the IDAHO Committee, IDAHO Day is now celebrated in over 60 countries around the world.



■ The situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and of the defenders of their rights is today a **key French foreign policy concern in the area of human rights** in connection with the fight against human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, both at European and international level.

■ Within the European Union (EU), France participated in the drafting of a "Toolkit" adopted by the EU in June 2010. This document is intended to guide the action of Member States on this issue and to provide staff in EU institutions and in EU Delegations, Representations and Embassies with an operational set of tools to be used in contacts with third countries, as well as with international and civil society organizations, in order to promote and protect the fundamental rights enjoyed by LGBTI people within EU external action.

■ At international level, in **December 2008** France, jointly with the Netherlands, presented to the United Nations General Assembly the text of the **Statement on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity**. This Statement, signed

by 68 States to date, is a major development in the recognition of the fight against human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Other international initiatives, including those by the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States, have also made it possible to oppose violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation.



■ Moreover, France helped draft the Joint Statement of 22 March 2011 on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations Based On Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and supported the adoption in June 2011 of **Resolution 17/19 on Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity**

**by the Human Rights Council**. Pursuant to that resolution, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) submitted the **first United Nations report on discriminatory laws and practices and acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity**. During the 19th session of the Human Rights Council in March 2012, a historic panel was convened to determine how to follow up the report.

■ Following on from the Statement of December 2008, on IDAHO Day in May 2009, France organized a World Congress on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity together with the Netherlands and Norway and in consultation with the NGOs working on this issue. The recommendations made at this international meeting included the need to draw up programmes of action, encourage regional action and establish networks.

■ In the face of the numerous human rights violations targeting LGBTI people and human rights defenders working on the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, **France, with the support of the Netherlands and Norway, decided to establish an international support Fund to finance concrete actions aimed at addressing such violations.**

#### FRANCE AND SUPPORT FOR THE QUEER ZAGREB FESTIVAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ON THE THEMES OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

In the context of the 10th edition of the Queer Zagreb Festival in April 2012, an international conference, supported in particular by France, the European Union and the German Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation, was held in Zagreb from 26 to 28 April 2012. It brought together around LGBTI issues close to 50 human rights defenders from 17 countries in central and eastern Europe, the Caucasus and the Near and Middle East. This event was aimed at **strengthening action networks and exchanging concrete experiences of approaches to LGBTI issues** in a wide variety of sociocultural contexts.

■ The aim of the Support Fund for Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity is to **propose a structure to all public and private partners** including governments, public authorities, enterprises, NGOs and foundations wanting to support the fight against homophobia and transphobia where needs are greatest. **The Fund is hosted by France Expertise Internationale (FEI) which is the operator of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE).** The Fund is managed by a Steering Committee comprising nine members, namely a MAE representative who chairs the Committee, four civil society representatives (two NGOs specializing in LGBTI and two general NGOs working to promote and protect human rights) and four representatives of contributors.

■ The Support Fund provides an innovative framework for spurring and pooling the efforts of all actors in the fight against homophobia and transphobia. It is designed to **strengthen local initiatives in countries where such issues are deemed too sensitive to be aired publicly**, which significantly limits civil society's scope for action regarding this issue. The Fund is therefore a genuine advocacy tool in relation to public opinion which is a vehicle for medium- and long-term change.

■ An initial international call for projects to decriminalize homosexuality and defend freedom of expression and association led in 2011, on the basis of the 126 proposals received, to the selection of **three cooperation projects** in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. The initial outcomes of these initiatives supported and implemented thanks

to the LGBTI Fund were the realization of audiovisual interviews and documentaries as **sexual orientation and gender identity awareness tools**. This call for projects also helped finance the organization of an LGBTI film festival which received coverage from national and international media, support the creation of partnerships with other local bodies, promote exchanges on this issue with representatives of local authorities (religious leaders, prison staff, etc.) and identify and provide legal aid in cases of violence or applications for asylum.



#### ➤ USEFUL LINKS

##### Statement of 18 December 2008

[www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article4092](http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article4092)

##### Yogyakarta Principles

[www.jogyakartaprinciples.org/index.html](http://www.jogyakartaprinciples.org/index.html)

##### Joint Statement on Ending Acts of Violence and Related Human Rights Violations based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (22 March 11)

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4eb8f32e2.html>

##### IDAHO Committee

[www.idahomophobia.org](http://www.idahomophobia.org)

##### ILGA

<http://ilga.org>

##### Inter-LGBT

[www.inter-lgbt.org](http://www.inter-lgbt.org)

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