



17 May 2014 – It was once said that “silence is golden”, whoever said this never had to fight injustice. Society’s silence in the face of discrimination is tantamount to support. As the world observes the [International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia](#) , the message is abundantly clear: speak out!

In the world today, extreme cases of discrimination against the LGBT community still exists. Indeed, in some countries such as Uganda, it is institutionalized by the government. The U [gan anti-homosexuality law](#) carries harsh penalties including life in prison for “repeat offenders” and an obligation to denounce any person exhibiting LGBT behavior.

In other states such as Russia, members of the LGBT community have suffered from violence and discrimination. Prior the [Sochi Olympic](#) games [Human Rights Watch released a video](#) documenting shocking and violent attacks on gay men carried out by anti-gay vigilantes. Even in countries considered as progressive discrimination exists. For example, while in the United States 19 states have same-sex marriage, 16 states still explicitly ban same-sex marriage and others allow same-sex civil unions but not marriage.

Today’s observance is celebrated in 120 countries around the world as citizens mobilize public opinion to defend the rights of fellow humans. Violence and discrimination against LGBT people are still pervasive, taking the form of discriminatory laws, unjust representations in the media, unfair treatment by employers, and negative social attitudes. In at least 77 countries around the world today, same sex relationships are illegal, at times involving life-time imprisonment. In 7 countries, same sex acts are even [punishable by death](#) .

The power of speaking out, of voicing our ideas is the most powerful way to obtain change. Civil rights, suffrage, women's rights were all achieved in the world by people speaking up for themselves and with others raising their voice with them. The fight against climate change has gained ground as at first few, then progressively more spoke out and demanded action. Equality in the world, a goal stated by many state's constitutions and pursued by the UN, includes everyone. Regardless of age, race, gender or sexual orientation we as human beings have a right to coexist and live in peace, free of fear or oppression.

The campaign against homophobia and transphobia this year asks you to join the movement for a world free and equal for all by sharing a message of support for those you know and love using the hashtag: #IDAHOT. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has lent his voice to the campaign [asking citizens](#) , "Do we want to live in a world where love is targeted or where it is celebrated; where people live in fear or in dignity?"

See the official video for the IDAHOT campaign: www.unfe.org/IDAHOT2014