

[LGBT rights | UN's new expert on sexual orientation and gender identity faces yet another attempt to halt work](#)

19.12.2016

Another attempt to scuttle the work of the UN's expert on sexual orientation and gender identity is underway with a vote due to take place in the General Assembly today.



Human rights groups thought they had secured a historic win in June when the UN Human Rights Council appointed an independent expert to help combat the high levels of violence and discrimination faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) people around the world. However, opposition to the new mandate has been relentless and its fate now rests on what is expected to be a knife-edge vote in the General Assembly today in New York.

Pooja Patel at the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) said reversing the decision of the world's peak human rights body would set an extremely worrying precedent.

'Rejecting the work of independent expert could really throw the whole UN human rights system into quite a spin as it will be a direct challenge to the authority of the Human Rights Council,' said Ms Patel.

Eight hundred and seventy organisations from 157 countries around the world have signed an [open letter](#) (carta en [español](#) / [lettre](#) en français) urging the governments represented in the General Assembly to respect the Human Rights Council's decision and defend the principle of non-discrimination.

'Nations voting to halt the expert's work need to realise that their vote will be deeply harmful - it will send a clear message that they are willing to tolerate the unacceptable levels of discrimination currently faced by LGBT people. Further they will be actively voting to erode the authority of the Human Rights Council,' said Ms Patel.

Alarming, votes at the UN on issues relating to LGBT rights are getting tighter. Last month's attempt to derail the mandate in the UN's Third Committee - which considers social, humanitarian and culture issues, was only defeated by seven votes. Given 17 nations abstained from that vote, the outcome of this week's General Assembly vote is hard to predict.

'We're in a real danger zone. Things are winding up for the Christmas break, representatives are starting to fly back to their home countries and we have a very important vote which we know is going to be very close. The human rights and LGBT communities really need to rally once again to muster support and ensure their national governments will be voting on the right side of history,' said Ms Patel.

Check out & share our backgrounder video about today's vote at the UN General Assembly re

#SOGI expert <https://t.co/i5YjDLca8Q>

— ISHR (@ISHRglobal) [December 19, 2016](#)

For further comments or information, please call ISHR's Tom Clarke (in Geneva) on +41 797 590 448 or via email t.clarke@ishr.ch or Eleanor Openshaw (in New York) on +1 929 426 7679 or via email e.openshaw@ishr.ch

A copy of the joint letter and a list of the signatories can be found here: [joint_sogi_letter_listofsignatories12152016.pdf](#)

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