



For Immediate Release

'Yogyakarta Principles' a Milestone for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights

Experts Set Out Global Standards for Sexual Rights and Gender Equality

(Geneva, March 26, 2007) – A groundbreaking set of principles on sexual orientation, gender identity, and international law is a landmark advance in the struggle for basic human rights as well as gender equality, Human Rights Watch and the Center for Women's Global Leadership said today. The document, known as the Yogyakarta Principles after the city where it was adopted, was launched today in Geneva by a group of 29 international human rights experts.

"These principles establish basic standards for how governments should treat people whose rights are too often denied and whose dignity is too often reviled," said Scott Long, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program at Human Rights Watch. "Firmly grounded in law and precedent, they enshrine a simple idea: human rights do not admit exceptions."

The "Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Law in Relation to Issues of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" were adopted by a meeting of experts in international law in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in November 2006. They confirm legal standards for how governments and other actors should end violence, abuse, and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, and ensure full equality.

The experts launching the principles include a former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as UN independent experts, members of UN treaty bodies, judges, activists, and academics. Human Rights Watch was part of a secretariat supporting the work of the experts who developed the principles. The Center for Women's Global Leadership was a member of the advisory committee to the secretariat.

“For more than three decades, lesbians have been among the millions of women’s rights activists pressing the international community to put gender equality at the heart of the human rights agenda,” said Charlotte Bunch, executive director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership. “These sweeping principles are a bold and important step forward. Addressing civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights, they show how sexual rights and gender equality are inextricably interwoven with the full scope of rights protections.”

The Yogyakarta Principles were developed in response to well-documented patterns of abuse around the globe. These abuses, perpetrated because of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, have affected millions.

The principles address:

- rape and other forms of gender-based violence;
- extrajudicial executions;
- torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment;
- medical abuses;
- repression of free speech and assembly; and
- discrimination in work, health, education, housing, access to justice, and immigration.

The principles also map out a positive road to full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people around the world. Each principle is accompanied by detailed recommendations to states on how to end discrimination and abuse. The principles also call for action from the UN’s human rights system, national human rights institutions, the media, nongovernmental organizations, and others.

The principles were launched today at the UN Human Rights Council’s session in Geneva, where last year 54 states called for the council to act against egregious violations of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

The full text of the Yogyakarta Principles, along with supporting materials, can be found online at <http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/>.

The experts who adopted the Yogyakarta Principles are:

Philip Alston (Australia), UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions and Professor of Law, New York University School of Law, USA

Maxim Anmeghichean (Moldova), European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association

Mauro Cabral (Argentina), Universidad Nacional de Cordoba, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

Edwin Cameron (South Africa), Justice, Supreme Court of Appeal, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Sonia Onufer Corrêa (Brazil), Research Associate at the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA) and co-chair of the International Working Group on Sexuality and Social Policy (Co-chair of the experts' meeting)

Yakin Ertürk (Turkey), UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Professor, Department of Sociology, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

Elizabeth Evatt (Australia), Former member and chair of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, former member of the UN Human Rights Committee and Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists

Paul Hunt (New Zealand), UN Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of health and professor, Department of Law, University of Essex, United Kingdom

Asma Jahangir (Pakistan), Chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

Maina Kiai (Kenya), Chairperson, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

Miloon Kothari (India), UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing

Judith Mesquita (United Kingdom), Senior Research Officer, Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, United Kingdom

Alice M. Miller (United States of America), Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, Co-director, Human Rights Program, Columbia University

Sanji Mmasenono Monageng (Botswana), Judge of the High Court (The Republic of the Gambia), Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Chairperson of the Follow Up Committee on the implementation of the Robben Island Guidelines on prohibition and prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights)

Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand), UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and professor of Law at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand (Co-chair of the experts' meeting)

Lawrence Mute (Kenya), Commissioner, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights

Manfred Nowak (Austria), Professor and co-director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights, Austria and UN Human Rights Council

Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

Ana Elena Obando Mendoza (Costa Rica), feminist attorney, women's human rights activist, and international consultant

Michael O'Flaherty (Ireland), Member of the UN Human Rights Committee and Professor of Applied Human Rights and Co-director of the Human Rights Law Centre at the University of Nottingham (Rapporteur for the development of the Yogyakarta Principles)

Sunil Pant (Nepal), President of the Blue Diamond Society, Nepal

Dimitrina Petrova (Bulgaria), Executive Director, The Equal Rights Trust

Rudi Muhammad Rizki (Indonesia), UN Special Rapporteur on international solidarity and senior Lecturer and the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs of the Faculty of Law at the University of Padjadjaran, Indonesia

Mary Robinson (Ireland), Founder of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Nevena Vuckovic Sahovic (Serbia and Montenegro), Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and President of the Child Rights Centre, Belgrade, Serbia Montenegro

Martin Scheinin (Finland), UN Special Rapporteur on counterterrorism and professor of Constitutional and International Law, Director of the Institute for Human Rights

Wan Yanhai (China), founder of the AIZHI Action Project and director of Beijing AIZHIXING Institute of Health Education

Stephen Whittle (United Kingdom), Professor in Equalities Law at Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

Roman Wieruszewski (Poland), Member of the UN Human Rights Committee and head of Poznan Centre for Human Rights, Poland

Robert Wintemute (United Kingdom), Professor of Human Rights Law, School of Law, King's College London, United Kingdom

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