



## Policy Brief:

### Human Rights Defenders or LGBT/Abortion Activists?

The term “human rights defender” is increasingly appearing in UN resolutions, declarations, reports and conference outcome documents. Nations should beware that this term is deliberately being used by sexual rights activists as a euphemism to promote LGBT and abortion rights.

The question, “Who is a Defender?,” which appears on the [website of the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights](#) (OHCHR) is the question Member States need to ask when negotiating any provision referring to “human rights defenders.”

Documents posted on the OHCHR website make it clear that both the OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders consider LGBT and abortion rights activists to be “human rights defenders” and that nations should respect, promote and protect such defenders.

For example, on page 2 of the [Commentary on the Declaration on Defenders of Human Rights](#) posted on the OHCHR website, the following phrase seeks to broaden the definition of human rights defenders to include those who are promoting “sexual minorities” (i.e., lesbians, gays, transsexuals, bisexuals, etc.).

“They [human rights defenders] sometimes address the rights of categories of persons, for example women’s rights, children’s rights, the rights of indigenous persons, the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the rights of national, linguistic or **sexual minorities**.” (page 2)

The OHCHR commentary also reveals that the OHCHR and the special rapporteur believe that integrating a “gender perspective” means protecting those who are “challenging traditional notions of the Family” or those who are promoting and defending “sexual orientation.”

“In accordance with the Special Rapporteur’s mandate to integrate a gender perspective throughout her work, this commentary pays particular attention to the specificities of the situation of women human rights defenders and the particular challenges they face. In this regard, both mandate holders have

reiterated on several occasions that women defenders are more at risk of suffering certain forms of violence and other violations, prejudice, exclusion, and repudiation than their male counterparts. This is often due to the fact that women defenders are perceived as challenging accepted sociocultural norms, traditions, perceptions and stereotypes about femininity, **sexual orientation**, and the role and status of women in society.

**Their work is often seen as challenging traditional notions of the Family**, which can serve to normalize and perpetuate forms of violence and the oppression of women. This can, in certain contexts, lead to hostility or lack of support from the general population, as well as from the authorities.” (This para originally appeared in A/HRC/16/44, para. 23.)

This next paragraph makes it quite clear that the OHCHR and the special rapporteur consider “women human rights defenders” to include those who are advocating for “sexuality-based rights.”

“Women human rights defenders often face further stigmatization by virtue of their sex or the gender or **sexuality-based rights** they advocate. As noted by the Special Rapporteur, such work can be perceived as challenging established sociocultural norms, tradition or perceptions about the role and status of women in society.

Of great concern is the fact that the OHCHR has identified “faith-based groups” as obstacles to “defenders working on issues such as the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.”

“In addition, community leaders and **faith-based groups** are increasingly resorting to the stigmatization of, and attacks against, defenders working on issues such as the **rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.**” (This para originally appeared in A/HRC/4/37/Add.2, para. 32.)

Finally, the following para calls upon States to protect the rights of LGBT activists and to provide them with “specific and enhanced protections”:

“States should make more efforts to recognize and protect women human rights defenders and defenders working to promote economic, social and cultural rights, as well as those working to uphold the rights of minorities, indigenous peoples and **lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.** Those defenders need specific and enhanced protection, as well as targeted

and deliberate efforts to make the environment in which they operate a safer, more enabling and more accepting one.” (A/63/288 Annex, para. 8)

With regard to abortion it is clear that the OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur intend for “women defenders” to include abortion rights activists:

“The mandate has received information concerning allegations of systematic persecution of women defenders in connection with their therapeutic **abortion** in the country.”

### **Delete or Define**

It is recommended that UN Member States that oppose the advancement of LGBT and abortion rights in their countries, protect their national sovereignty by rejecting in UN negotiations any references to “human rights defenders” or provisions calling for the integration of a “gender perspective” unless these terms are defined in such a way as to prevent them from being used to advance abortion and LGBT rights.