



Advancing LGBTQI+ Inclusion in U.S. Foreign Policy

GLOBAL EQUALITY TODAY — NOVEMBER 2024

Writing at the very beginning of November, we are now just a few days away from the U.S. Presidential election. At this incredibly stressful moment, **we hope you are taking good care of yourself and those important to you** — whether that involves door-to-door canvassing, phone banking, getting out the vote, or election integrity work, *and/or* it includes long walks, working out the gym, a glass of wine, baking, or many dozens of other ways you can care for yourself, your loved ones, and your community.

This year has been a year of elections all around the globe, with an estimated half of the world's voting-age population going to the polls. As Maria Ressa — the Nobel Prize-winning journalist from the Philippines and author of *[How to Stand Up to a Dictator](#)* — has said, **democracy itself is on the ballot in 2024**. Indeed, some of this year's elections have brought victories for democracy, inclusion, and human rights; others have seen the triumph of authoritarianism, exclusion, and prejudice.

The Council is continuing to educate our partners on Capitol Hill, in civil society, at foreign embassies in Washington, and elsewhere about [the profound dangers that Project 2025 poses, especially for LGBTQI+ people](#) both in the United States and internationally — and we encourage you to download and share our [fact sheet](#) on Project 2025. While the “Project 2025” label has, thankfully, become a political liability over the last few months, the policy proposals aren't disappearing. In fact, **many elements of Project 2025 are already being implemented both at the state level in the United States and in other countries**.

In these challenging and uncertain times, the Council is evaluating our communications strategy to both improve our advocacy and to reflect our core values. To that end, we cannot use Twitter/X as a meaningful social media tool when that platform's owner is sanctioning

disinformation and hatred as well as donating millions of dollars to undermine voting rights, the rule of law, and democracy itself.

To that end, please follow the Council for Global Equality on [LinkedIn](#) and [Bluesky](#), the first new social media channels where we will be promoting our work and that of our partners.

Democratic Backsliding

The global threat to democracy — and the strategic use of homophobia and transphobia to undermine the rule of law — are front and center in our ongoing work, especially right now. For a global overview, take a look at our blog, [“The Perilous Impact of Democratic Backsliding on LGBTQI+ Communities,”](#) as well as the [research report](#) on this topic released by the Williams Institute, a CGE member, last year.

We also encourage you to share the [2024 F&M Global Barometers LGBTQI+ Perception Index Survey](#) (open until November 19 and available in fifteen languages) from our long-term partners at Franklin & Marshall College. This survey will further help document the lived experience of democratic backsliding on LGBTQI+ people globally.

Combating Extremists and Authoritarians

The Council is working hard to build **international partnerships to combat the highly coordinated anti-rights, anti-gender movement that is using attacks on LGBTQI+ rights and reproductive freedom to roll back fundamental human rights for all.** We are also using and deepening our toolbox to combat the bad actors who are traveling the world to promote hate and extremism.

Those tools include sanctions and visa restrictions. Last month, we received the good news that the Treasury Department had imposed [Global Magnitsky sanctions against two far-right, ferociously anti-LGBTQI+ Georgian media figures](#) for spreading hate speech and disinformation against marginalized communities and for directly calling for violence against peaceful demonstrators. The two leaders from the pro-Kremlin media outlet, *Alt-Info*, were instrumental in instigating violence at Tbilisi Pride in both 2021 and 2023.

In light of the recent invitation for a far-right Italian thinktank leader to participate in a State Department IVLP program and of the plans for [two prominent figures in Europe’s extreme-right movement](#) to attend an upcoming white supremacist conference in Tennessee, we are asking our U.S. government partners whether this is [now the time to limit access to the United States for such extremists](#).

We, of course, recognize the necessity of diplomacy that fosters dialogue across the political spectrum. But in such a polarized world, is bolstering the credentials of those that promote Christian nationalism and oppose the rights of LGBTQI+, women, and other vulnerable populations, that undermine the U.S. Constitution itself, the direction the U.S. government wants to go?

The forces backing the anti-rights, anti-gender movement are many, spanning Russian political leaders and oligarchs; U.S. evangelical groups; billionaires from the Gulf States, Spain, and Mexico; and more. You may have seen the recent [*Wall Street Journal* article documenting the money trail from Moscow to those bad actors who successfully lobbied for the passage of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act last year.](#)

Russia's LGBTQI+ community continues to take the greatest brunt of the Putin regime's use of homophobia and transphobia as a foreign policy tool. Earlier this year, we shared a guest post about [the grave crisis facing LGBTQI+ Russians after last fall's ruling defining "the international LGBT movement" to be "extremist."](#) As other anti-LGBTQI+ measures originating in Russia have been replicated from Uganda to Hungary to Florida, we must remain vigilant against the spread of this language of extremism.

Defending Democracy

Despite all the threats to freedom, our movement is determined to expand LGBTQI+ human rights and strengthen democracy. As it turns out, [campaigns for marriage equality are good for democracy](#), as explained in a recent op-ed the Council co-authored with Freedom to Marry Global. Not only does changing public attitudes toward LGBTQI+ people and their families have immediate, tangible impacts for the community, marriage campaigns have proven to yield an array of long-term benefits for LGBTQI+ civil society and democratic participation — including increasing overall support for LGBTQ causes, strengthening civic organizations, testing the implementation of new strategies to engage decision makers, training new generations of LGBTQI+ leaders, and instilling belief in activism, the rule of law, and effecting democratic change.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The Council continues to advocate for the needs of LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers, who face daunting bureaucratic challenges in trying to reach safety above and beyond the omnipresent threats of violence and discrimination in their countries of origin and transit countries. To this end, we are working with various State Department and Homeland Security offices to make refugee resettlement mechanisms more LGBTQI+-sensitive. We are also promoting the Welcome Corps initiative to resettle LGBTQI+ refugees, including one CGE staff member who has led a group of volunteers that welcomed a gay refugee from Latin America earlier this year. That refugee is thriving in his new life in Washington, DC, and we are humbled to be able to make such a difference.

To read more, please check out, ["Fleeing for Identity: The Plight of LGBTQI+ Refugees and the Welcome Corps Initiative."](#)

As we noted in our [World Refugee Day blog](#), we celebrate the important strides the Biden-Harris Administration has made to rebuild the U.S. refugee system after the devastating cuts made under his predecessor. At the same time, however, as we explain in that post, the Council — along with CGE members Immigration Equality, Rainbow Railroad, ORAM, IRAP, Amnesty International USA, the Human Rights Campaign, and Human Rights First — all

forcefully condemned President Biden's Executive Order that puts LGBTQI+ asylum seekers and those from other vulnerable groups in even greater danger than they already are. We furthermore call on the next presidential administration to reject the fear-driven border politics that shaped both the previous Trump and Biden years.

Heroes and Champions

To wind down on a happy and hopeful note, we share once more these stories of the **creative, resilient global activists** we spotlighted for [Transgender Day of Visibility](#) and International Women's Day earlier this year. We also are delighted to boost the **Intersex Awareness Day** (October 26) [resources](#) shared last week by InterACT, a CGE member.

We also are happy to offer you the words of Bishop Joseph Tolton, the Council's Faith Engagement Coordinator, President and Founder of Interconnected Justice, and the Bishop of East Africa for The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM). **For IDAHOBIT, Bishop Tolton reflected on the resilient [Cosmopolitan Affirming Church in Kenya](#)**, which continues to thrive in the face of spiritual violence and a draconian anti-LGBTQI+ bill currently under consideration.

Finally, we are delighted to share the news that just this week, [Mark Dann, our volunteer lobbyist, won a Top Lobbyist Award](#) from NILE (the National Institute for Lobbying & Ethics) for his work to prevent Uzbekistan from securing a favorable trade agreement with the United States while Tashkent continues to commit gross human rights violations against its LGBTQI+ population. Congratulations, Mark!