



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
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Centre for Human Rights
Faculty of Law



PRESS STATEMENT

STATEMENT FROM THE CENTRE FOR SEXUALITIES, AIDS AND GENDER AND THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN RECOGNITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA AND BIPHOBIA (IDAHOT)

16 May 2017

17 May is the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), celebrated in more than 130 countries around the world.

The International IDAHOT Committee, founded in 2005 as an independent initiative, aimed at fighting against discriminations and injustices on the grounds of sexual orientation and/or gender identity or expression. This year, there is a special focus on families, including the role of families in the well-being of their LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex or Queer) members as well as respect for the rights of diverse LGBTIQ families.

The Centre for Sexualities, AIDS and Gender and the Centre for Human Rights, at the University of Pretoria, recognise this day as critical to their work in the promotion of equality, rights and dignity in South Africa. Apart from the damage to families caused by apartheid policies and migrant labour, challenges around poverty, food insecurity, housing, social services, HIV and many other issues still affect family life and cohesion.

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Lauréat 2012 du Prix des droits de l'homme de l'Union Africaine • Winner of the 2012 African Union Human Rights Prize
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We are all part of families, and these families influence most aspects of our lives, shaping our identities, our values and the ways in which we live. There are also many different ways of expressing family belonging: we may have close biological families, foster families, extended families and new families that we create.

Families are the place where we should have security and safety and we all want and need to be accepted and respected in our family and social environments. Yet families are often not safe. Young people who are experimenting with their sexuality, or who identify as LGBTIQ, are often placed at odds with “family values” and social expectations. Along with LGBTIQ people who set up “alternative” families, they may experience stigma, rejection, violence and a lack of support. The failure to be protected and respected inside a family or community system is often complicated by social and religious beliefs, and is almost always painful and distressing.

For others, their sexual and gender identity and expression is embraced and accepted by their immediate and extended family members, or their alternative family formations are welcomed. These positive developments reflect the ethos of the protections for LGBTIQ people enshrined in the South African Constitution as well as the spirit of Resolution 275 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, calling for an end to rights violations against persons on the basis of their real or imputed sexual orientation or gender identity.

On 17 May we recognise and celebrate the fact that so many people are able to express their sexuality, sexual and gender identity and expression, and make choices of family formations. We also celebrate the families and communities that support and embrace them.

We also recognise that 17 May is a day to recognise that many people have neither families nor family and social support for their sexualities, identities and practices. As such, their sense of belonging and “home” is complex, difficult and unfulfilled.

As we recognise this day we reaffirm our determination to fight for the rights enshrined in the South African Constitution and international and continental human rights commitments. We recognise this day as part of the ongoing commitment to dignity, social justice, equality and security for all citizens of our society, and indeed all societies.

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