Introduction

Despite constant efforts of the United Nations and various Non-Government Organizations (NGO) to promote LGBT rights, the human rights and stance of LGBT people are continuously being violated around the world. Culturally accepted homophobic and transphobic attitudes in addition to the lack of legal protection against discrimination to LGBT people have exposed LGBT people to violence, discriminatory practices and segregation. Specific groups and countries, such as the Russian Federation and the many Neo-Nazi groups across Russia have led the charge against LGBT people and used social media to publicly humiliate them and scare the LGBT minority in Russia.

LGBT rights include the rights to same-sex sexual encounters, hate crime laws for prejudice-motivated violence against LGBT people, immigration equality laws, anti-discrimination laws for employment, anti-discrimination laws in public education and the workplace.

In order to ensure respect and safety for LGBT people, all member states, non-governmental organizations and the public must work closely with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to construct a healthier and harmonious society where people with different sexual orientation can be accepted and pursue promotion of LGBT people.

United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon said “We must all raise our voices against attacks on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex people. We must oppose the arrests, imprisonments and discriminatory restrictions they face” It is our collective duty to protect the LGBT minority in Russia and the former republics, through careful cooperation and mutual understanding between several parties.
Definition of Key Terms

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is the romantic attraction, sexual attraction and sexual behavior between members of the same sex. It is also a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors. Homosexuality is among the three main categories of sexual orientation, along with bisexuality and heterosexuality.

Bisexuality

Bisexuality is the romantic and sexual attraction or behavior toward both males and females, and is among the three main categories of sexual orientation along with bisexuality and heterosexuality.

Transgender

Transgender is the state of one's gender identity or expression not matching one's original, assigned sex at birth. Transgender people can be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual; they are not subject to a certain sexual orientation.

LGBT

LGBT refers to Lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender collectively.

Gender Identity

Gender Identity is an individual's sense of one's own gender. For most people, gender identity is consistent with their respective sex, but transgender people are inconsistent with their gender identity and sex.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation is romantic or sexual attraction to people of a certain sex, or both sexes. Sexual Orientation can often be divided in three parts, with Bisexuality, Heterosexuality and Homosexuality being the three main categories of sexual orientation.

Homophobia

Homophobia is the irrational fear, hatred or discrimination against homosexuality or homosexuals.

Transphobia

Transphobia is the antagonistic feelings and behaviors against transsexuality and transsexual or transgender people.
Hate Crime

Hate Crime is threats, harassment or physical and mental harm towards a certain person or group motivated by prejudice against one's race, color or sexual orientation.

Former Soviet Republics

The Former Soviet Republics are 15 independent states that emerged from the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The 15 states include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Background

The Situation in Russia

Homosexuality in Russia has been oppressed and discriminated against throughout history. Although homosexual acts between consenting people were legalized in May 27, 1993, homosexuals are constantly oppressed. In the Russian government, no openly LGBT Russian has been elected to parliament, and the government tends to ignore LGBT issues and rights. Many Russians, including politicians publicly oppose LGBT people and groups, with politician Vitaly Milonov personally raiding a gay bar with riot police and a film crew.

In June 2013, the national parliament passed an anti-LGBT law banning distribution of materials promoting LGBT relationships among minors, which was signed by President Vladimir Putin. Under this law, it is illegal to hold gay rights events, parades, speak in favor of LGBT relationships in the presence of minors, which greatly puts LGBT groups and individuals at risk as the law can be exploited to harass and discriminate LGBT people. Critics state that the law is purposely written so broadly so it can impose a complete ban on the gay rights movement and public expression of LGBT rights in Russia. The law sparked controversy in 2014 prior to the Sochi Olympics, with world leaders David Cameron, Angela Merkel and Barack Obama condemning the law, and celebrities publicly criticizing the anti-LGBT legislation.

Anti-Gay Attacks

Anti-Gay attacks are on the rise in Russia, with over 500 Neo-Nazi groups in Russia targeting LGBT people, publicly attacking and humiliating them in order to oppress the LGBT population and movement in Russia. Recently, in many social networking sites in Russia including vkontake, videos of Neo-Nazi groups torturing LGBT people have surfaced, with a horrific video of a transgender woman being forced to sit on a bottle receiving favorable comments from the public, showing the cultural and social disapproval of LGBT people in Russia. Torturing, as well as discrimination and hate crimes against LGBT people are clearly a violation of basic human rights.
The Situation in the Former Republics

Many former Soviet Republics share a similar viewpoint with Russia, and LGBT people are culturally unaccepted and discriminated against in the former republics. Former republics including Ukraine, Lithuania and Azerbaijan have a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage. A former republic, the state of Ukraine is known as one of the most homophobic nations in Europe, with the Ukraine Orthodox Church publicly condemning LGBT people, stating they need to be cured. Violence against LGBT people are often tolerated by the government and the local police, with attackers hardly being detained by the police. There has been a strong ex-gay movement in Ukraine led by Love Against Homosexuality, which has the majority of the public support as well as members of the parliament and celebrities.

According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, many Eastern European nations are seeking to follow the path of the Russian Federation and impose their own version of an anti-gay law, to restrict public discussion and dissemination of homosexuality and gender identity information. The Moldovan government has already implemented amendments punishing propagation of LGBT relations. In a 2010 European Social Survey, Many Eastern European states showed an incredibly low approval rating of the right of LGBT people to live freely as they wish, with Russia showing a 25% approval, Ukraine 28%, Lithuania 28%, showing the cultural and social disapproval of LGBT people in Russia and the former republics.

Major Parties Involved

Russia

The Russian Federation is the world’s largest country with a population of 142 million people. A permanent member of the Security Council, Russia stands as one of the most powerful nations in the world today.

The LGBT community in Russia has been constantly attacked and provoked, with Neo-Nazi groups constantly attacking the community and humiliating them in public. The LGBT community is not only unprotected by law, they are banned from releasing propaganda regarding homosexuality in the presence of teenagers, and has to pay large fines if caught doing so. The government and local police tend to overlook Attackers on the LGBT community, allowing them to freely violate the basic human rights of the LGBT population in Russia.

In 2013, the Russian parliament passed a law banning gay propaganda, which was signed by President Vladimir Putin.

Former Republics

The Former Soviet Republics are 15 independent states that emerged from the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The 15 states include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.
The situation for the LGBT population in the Former Republics is similar to the situation in Russia, with constant harassment and attacks on the population being reported while the government and the local police overlook the attackers. Very few attackers have been detained or arrested.

An amendment similar to the anti-gay propaganda law in Russia was passed in Moldova, and the OHCHR reports that many Former Republics are planning to implement similar laws as the Russian anti-gay propaganda law.

**International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)**

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) is a non-government organization (NGO) that serves to promote and secure the LGBT rights around the world, and is the largest LGBT organization in the world with members in 110 countries.

**The Human Rights Council**

The United Nations Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the UN and serves as the guardian of human rights, promoting and protecting it around the world.

**Timeline of Events**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The World Health Organization (WHO) removes homosexuality from its list of mental disorders</td>
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<td>2001</td>
<td>The Netherlands becomes the first country to legalize same-sex marriage</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>The International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) becomes celebrated across the world on May 17, and becomes an annual event.</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passes its first resolution recognizing LGBT rights</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Russia passes an anti-gay propaganda law, signed by President Vladimir Putin</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon leads a special conference on “Leadership in the Fight against Homophobia”</td>
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**Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The United Nations has formulated one resolution (A/HRC/RES/17/19) and one comprehensive report (A/HRC/19/41) on promoting LGBT rights, with clauses specifically pertaining to combating discrimination, which is the case in the former republics and Russia. The United Nations also began its Free & Equal campaign on July 26th 2013 in order to promote awareness for LGBT rights, and is
classified as a global education campaign for LGBT equality. Currently, 76 countries constitutionally oppose LGBT rights and some punish homosexual relations with capital punishment.

Recently, following the situation in the Sochi Olympics, the United Nations and its Human Rights Council (UNHCR) as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has emphasized the importance of promoting and securing LGBT rights, and Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon publicly stated that "We must all raise our voices against attacks on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or inter-sex people. We must oppose the arrests, imprisonments and discriminatory restrictions they face".

Despite the efforts of the United Nations and many NGOs including the ILGA, the Free & Equal campaigns as well as various LGBT awareness promotion campaigns have found little success in the former republics and Russia due to the overwhelming social disapproval for such actions, and the legal restrictions of gay-propaganda. People participating in the Gay parade in Kiev and St. Petersburg have been attacked by Neo-Nazi groups.

Possible Solutions

As stated by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the core principles to protect the rights of LGBT people are to:

- Protect individuals from homophobic and transphobic violence.
- Prevent torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.
- Repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality.
- Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Safeguard freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly for all LGBT

As LGBT rights is a fundamental human right that is constantly being violated in multiple former republics and Russia itself, solving the problem requires the cooperation of all former republics and Russia. Countries that have implemented very liberal approaches to LGBT situations such as the Netherlands should be carefully studied by the former republics and the Russian Federation. Collaboration of nations who have adopted anti LGBT discrimination laws and embrace LGBT people and groups to construct and provide legal framework under the guidance of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights would be crucial to the issue as it would be helpful for the countries struggling with LGBT issues, as they can simply adopt it.

With the current sanctions being imposed on the Russian Federation for their illegal invasion of Ukraine, an opportunity lies for LGBT rights to be secured. Member states, especially the United States and the European Union can collaborate to include a clause guiding the Russian government to nullify the Anti-Gay propaganda law and allow more freedom for LGBT activists and groups when the respective parties are at the negotiation table.

However, the promotion and safeguarding of LGBT people and their rights cannot happen quickly, due to the inherent social and cultural barriers prevalent in the former republics and the Russian Federation. This is an issue that greatly requires the participation of the public and private sector. The
usage of social networking sites and mass media to promote LGBT rights, sponsored by celebrities who embrace LGBT rights, such as Madonna would be very effective as citizens living in the former republics and the Russian Federation will be exposed to their idols supporting LGBT rights, which may change their opinion on the issue. Campaigns such as the Free & Equal Campaign should continue and receive support by international organizations such as Amnesty International and ILGA. Small but effective steps are required for this issue, and the possible solutions should always respect the local culture and customs in the region; therefore, a solution that is plausible and accepted by all parties is needed.

Furthermore, if possible, education in both the public and the private sector about the different gender orientations and the rights of LGBT people should be promoted in all member states of the United Nations. The current education and public awareness program being implemented in the Netherlands should be studied in order to construct a useful and effective education program about the rights of LGBT people as well as the different sexual orientations. Although a common curriculum formulated by the United Nations may be controversial in some areas where public stance on LGBT rights is negative, a common curriculum may be formulated to serve as a guide to nations willing to incorporate LGBT education programs into their current education system.

Appendix or Appendices

I.  

http://geneq.berkeley.edu/lgbt_resources_definition_of_terms  (Definition and basic information on LGBT)

The Berkeley website provides basic yet important information on what LGBT is, the differences between the sexual orientations.

II.  

www.ilga.org  (The website of the International Lesbian and Gay Association)

The ILGA website provides useful statistics and information regarding the situation for LGBT people around the world and holds together more than 750 different LGTBI groups, and has information on campaigns for LGBT rights.

Bibliography

"Russia 'ignoring' Anti-gay Attacks."  