



"The Riddle", a video produced by the UN Human Rights Office, asks the question, "What exists in every corner of the world – embraced and celebrated in some countries – but is illegal in 76? What is hidden for fear of public shame, imprisonment, torture or even the death penalty in seven countries?"

The answer: "Being gay, being lesbian, bisexual or transgender."

The video, featuring statements of support from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay has been released to coincide with the day, 17 May, celebrated by millions of people globally as the International Day against Homophobia (IDAHO).

In a keynote speech to the IDAHO 2013 Forum in The Hague, the Netherlands, Pillay conceded progress in recent years in overcoming homophobia but said, "many States are still reluctant to acknowledge the extent of violence and discrimination meted out to those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex."

She highlighted three areas of particular concern that require immediate attention.

The first, she said, relates to "hate crimes, which take place with alarming regularity in all regions of the world". "These range from aggressive, sustained psychological bullying through to physical assault, torture, kidnapping and even murder," Pillay said.

The second concern is "the criminalization of homosexuality". It is nearly 20 years since the UN Human Rights Committee found that people's right to privacy and non-discrimination are violated when same sex relationships are criminalized. Nonetheless, more than 70 countries continue to outlaw same sex relationships, Pillay said.

"The prevalence of discriminatory practices against LGBT individuals" is the third area of concern identified by the High Commissioner. "In some instances, States are not just passively permitting discrimination to take place but actively contributing to it," Pillay said.

In a message delivered on his behalf to the IDAHO Forum, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon described efforts to overcome homophobia as a "fight... a core part of the broader battle for human rights for all."

"We know what needs to be done," the Secretary-General said. "Draconian laws used to criminalize and punish LGBT people must be replaced by new laws that are in harmony with universal human rights conventions... "

The Secretary-General and High Commissioner both called for more public education to overcome homophobia.

"This is primarily the responsibility of Governments, with the active involvement of civil society. But I believe the United Nations can and should do more to encourage this process," Pillay said.

The High Commissioner noted that although the UN has more than 100 official international

days, the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia is not one of them.

"The Riddle", produced in collaboration with the Purpose Foundation was watched by more than 60,000 people within 24 hours of its release on YouTube. Directing its "simple" message to the millions of LGBT around the world, it concludes with "You are not alone. LGBT rights are human rights. Together we will build a world that is free and equal."

Source: [OHCHR](#)