

ERC Statement on the Aggression against Ukraine and the protection of LGBTI persons and refugees

The Equal Rights Coalition strongly condemns the war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, with the involvement of Belarus therein, grossly violates international law. Its humanitarian consequences are on a scale that the international community has not seen in Europe in decades. The Equal Rights Coalition is appalled by the aggression against one of its member states and expresses its solidarity with the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian people. The Equal Rights Coalition aligns itself with United Nations General Assembly resolutions A/ES-11/L.1 and A/RES/ES-11/2 and the Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/49/L1.

As the aggression against Ukraine intensifies, this severely impacts the LGBTI community in Ukraine and neighboring countries. As the United Nations Independent Expert on the protection from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity noted in his statement of 22 March, there is deeply concerning evidence about the additional dangers faced by LGBTI persons seeking protection during this time. Those who identify or are perceived as LGBTI are vulnerable to acts of stigmatization, harassment and violence from both combatants and civilians. The Equal Rights Coalition calls on all actors to protect the safety, dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of people fleeing the conflict and violence regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or sex characteristics.

In this context, it is essential for all stakeholders working on protecting forcibly displaced persons to recognize and respond to the exposure to risk and protection needs of LGBTI refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and undocumented people. As the UN Independent Expert noted, in armed conflicts, LGBTI displaced persons are often marginalized or excluded from established evacuation and emergency response services and processes. Civil society organizations that serve LGBTI displaced persons already have the specialized knowledge on how sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics create specific exposures to risk during conflict, and know how to respond to these risks and needs accordingly. The Equal Rights Coalition affirms its commitment to pay attention to the vulnerability and protection needs of LGBTI persons who have been forcibly displaced, and will continue to engage with civil society on how best to support Ukrainian LGBTI human rights defenders and communities.

The Coalition recalls its unwavering support to the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and to the urgent need for protection of LGBTI persons in these unprecedented times.

Equal Rights Coalition members who are co-signatories:

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