



June 30, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20521

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

As members of the Council for Global Equality, we write to express outrage at this Administration's continued denigration of the value that the United States traditionally has placed on human and democratic rights in the conduct of U.S. diplomacy.

For decades, U.S. diplomacy has recognized the preservation and advancement of human and democratic rights as an essential element of our country's national interests. We recognize, of course, that at times U.S. actions have not fully respected this understanding in practice. That said, the human rights pledges and aspirations voiced by the United States have set the country apart in the pursuit of a better world.

In this context, we were both perplexed and concerned at comments made to State Department employees last month, in which you suggested that the country's fundamental values can be separated from the foreign policies the U.S. stands for and pursues. That separation is, in our view, unwise if the United States is to remain true to its calling.

But we were truly taken aback in learning, through your budget testimony, that you have yet to raise with your Russian counterpart, or indeed at any senior leadership level, U.S. concern over the ongoing kidnappings, torture and murders of those suspected of being gay, lesbian or bisexual by Chechen officials.

To be clear, we place this neglect of values and responsibility not solely at your doorstep, but also at that of President Trump. Neither you nor the President has voiced clear recognition of the importance of human rights as a matter of U.S. policy. Neither has spoken out against specific human rights infringements during your terms of office to date, and neither attached personal concern to, or otherwise endorsed, the conclusions of this year's human rights reports. To the contrary, the Administration's embrace of a range of dictators, from Russian President Putin to Egyptian President Sissi, sends a clear signal that the U.S. is no longer the beacon of hope that has inspired generations around the world.


As a coalition of organizations seeking an end to the injustices, torture and discrimination endured by LGBT people in many countries around the world, we see in our daily work the importance of elevating, not spurning, human and democratic values. And yet beyond the visible distance, described above, this Administration has placed between it and any human rights embrace, it also has proposed audaciously

sharp reductions in the budget needed to support any range of human rights and rule of law priorities, humanitarian and refugee assistance, and preventive health programs impacting women and minority populations.

We believe this to be shortsighted and unwise, and out of keeping with America's character and interests. To be clear, countries that respect human and democratic rights of all, including their minority populations, tend to be America's best political and economic partners. They tend to have stable civil societies leading to geo-political security compared to countries where rights are neglected. In the long run, they are the best guarantors of regional stability.

We urge you to raise immediately, and with overdue stress, the need for Russia to investigate these atrocities, and that you explore all tools at your disposal to protect victims and curtail ongoing persecution that Chechen officials might continue to carry out against Russia's LGBT citizenry. We urge, too, that you aggressively pursue refugee resettlement options for those who already have been victimized. Finally, we urge that you and the President demonstrate, in your statements and policies, that the values we express as a nation are core not only to our identity but to what we aspire to achieve in the world.

Sincerely,



Mark Bromley  
Council Chair  
The Council for Global Equality



Julie Dorf  
Senior Advisor  
The Council for Global Equality



Michael Guest  
Senior Advisor  
The Council for Global Equality



Nicole Cheetham  
Director, International Youth  
Health and Rights Division  
Advocates for Youth



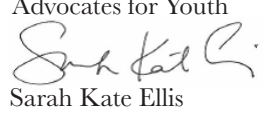
Margaret Huang  
Executive Director  
Amnesty International USA



Serra Sippel  
President  
Center for Health and  
Gender Equity (CHANGE)



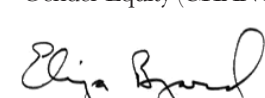
Joseph Tolton  
Executive Director  
The Fellowship Global



Sarah Kate Ellis  
Executive Director  
GLAAD



Rev. Pat Bumgardner  
Executive Director  
Global Justice Institute



Eliza Byard, PhD  
Executive Director  
GLSEN




Stefano Fabeni  
Executive Director  
Global Initiatives for Human Rights  
Heartland Alliance for Human  
Needs & Human Rights



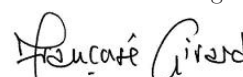
Ty Cobb  
Director, HRC Global  
Human Rights Campaign



Shawn M. Gaylord  
Advocacy Counsel  
Human Rights First



Aaron C. Morris  
Executive Director  
Immigration Equality



Françoise Girard  
President  
International Women's Health  
Coalition



Darrel Cummings  
Chief of Staff  
Los Angeles LGBT Center



George Ayala  
Executive Director  
The Global Forum on MSM  
& HIV



Julianna S. Gonen  
Policy Director  
National Center for Lesbian Rights



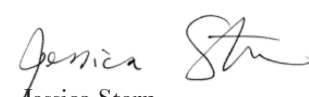
Mara Keisling  
Executive Director  
National Center for  
Transgender Equality



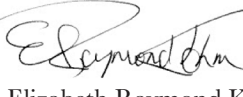
Justin Nelson  
Co-Founder & President  
National Gay & Lesbian  
Chamber of Commerce



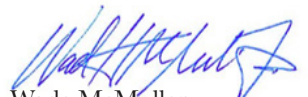
Victoria M. Rodríguez-  
Roldán, J.D.  
Senior Policy Counsel  
National LGBTQ Task Force



Jessica Stern  
Executive Director  
OutRight Action International



Elizabeth Raymond Kohm  
Interim Executive Director  
PFLAG National



Wade McMullen  
Managing Attorney  
Partners for Human Rights  
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights