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A group of people, including a man in the foreground wearing a rainbow sash and a woman in a light blue outfit, are celebrating and holding up large rainbow flags. They are outdoors on a paved area with steps in the background.

## **The Pink Line: What is happening to sexual and gender minorities globally?**

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A group of diverse people are gathered for a pride rally. In the foreground, a young woman with dark hair and a white shirt holds a sign that reads "Respect LGBT Rights". To her right, a young woman with curly hair and a pink sweater holds a large rainbow flag. In the background, other participants hold signs, including one that says "PROTECTED GAY RIGHTS" and another with a large red heart. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a public demonstration.

The world is getting better for LGBTQI+ human rights!

But this is not being felt evenly across the globe...

Why are the human  
rights of **global**  
sexual and gender  
minorities **changing?**





# QUEER WARS

DENNIS ALTMAN  
JONATHAN SYMONS

## 'Queer Wars' (Altman and Symon, 2016)

- Could be argued that the rapid increase in Western countries legalising same-sex marriage could point towards global patterns of increased liberalisation.
- Altman and Symons (2016) demonstrate that this is not the case. **Instead, there are two competing narratives.** Western liberalization (see Malta) alongside an increase in the criminalisation of homosexuality in other regions (see Uganda and Brunei).
- This is framed as an **'international polarisation.'**
- This backlash encourages a rejection of Western conceptions of liberalised sexuality politics as a means of resistance to the neo-colonial imposition of Western ideas.
- A **"conservative international"** (Altman and Symons, 2016: 103).
- "Just as support for sexual rights is being globalised, and supported by a number of Western-based NGOs, **so too homophobia is also being globalised**" (Altman and Symons, 2016: 103).

# 'The Pink Line' (Gevisser, 2020)

- “It is no coincidence that the notion of LGBT rights was spreading globally at the exact moment that old boundaries were collapsing in the era of globalisation.
- The collapse of these boundaries meant the rapid global spread of ideas about sexual equality or gender transition – and, at the same time, a dramatic reaction by conservative forces, by patriarchs and priests, who feared the inevitable loss of control that this process threatened” (Gevisser, 2020: 24).
- Gevisser (2020) calls it the ‘pink line’ and it’s enmeshed in a larger geo-political dynamic across the globe.
- It has been drawn politically, “with new battlegrounds opening up new frontiers of the culture wars” (Gevisser, 2020: 13). Line is both within and external to nation states.

The Pink Line

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The  
World's  
Queer  
Frontiers

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Mark Gevisser

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# Using political homophobia...

- **Weiss and Bosia (2013)** argue that political homophobia has become a **'core instrument of governance'** in the contemporary world.
- Deployed in postcolonial states and post-Communist states, but not exclusively. It has a range of merits:
  - **Deflects attention** from wider economic and social restructuring (see Nigeria and Uganda).
  - Reacts to **queer mobilisation and pre-empts it.**
  - Raises **the specter of same-sex marriage to reaffirm and assert 'traditional family values'** as the bedrock of national unity against sexual **Others.**
- In Iran, the execution of same-gender people can be seen as a **sign of national and 'sexual sovereignty'** by the Islamist regime and affirmation of the centrality of traditional roles (Weeks, 2016).





# Pulse Nightclub

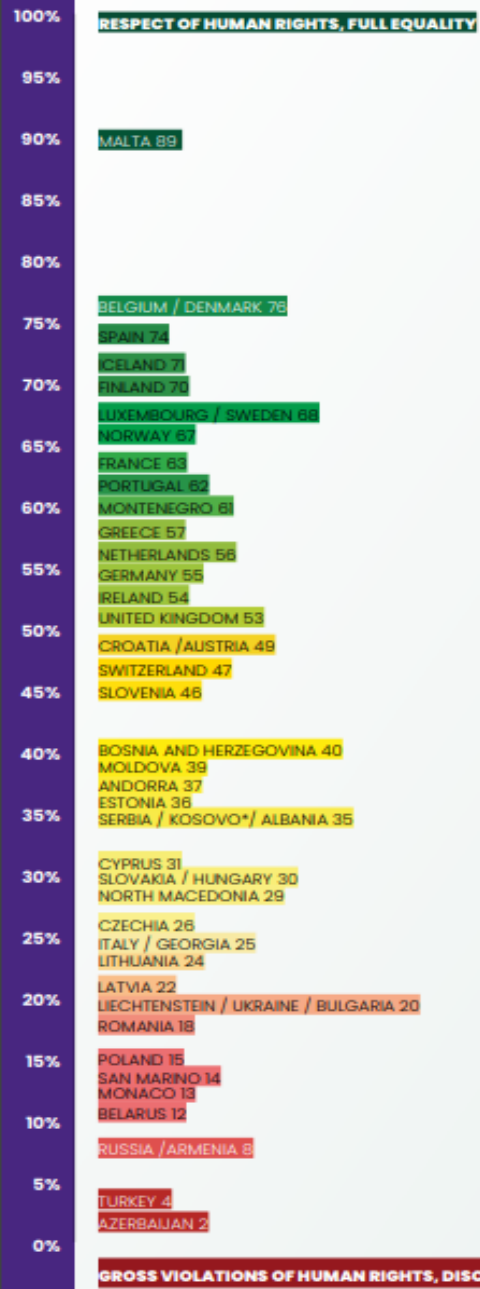
## Donald Trump

- "This is a very dark moment in America's history. A radical Islamic terrorist targeted the nightclub, not only because he wanted to kill Americans, but in order to execute gay and lesbian citizens, because of their sexual orientation. We want to live in a country where gay and lesbian Americans and all Americans are safe from radical Islam, which, by the way, wants to murder and has murdered gays and they enslave women" (President Trump, 2016).
- **Strengthened** his case for the Muslim travel ban.
- **Increased repressive laws and narratives** against LGBTQI+ people in the USA.



How is this impact **felt** by  
sexual and gender  
minorities?





# Region: MENA

- Simply a region of **'hot homophobia'** or more complex?
- **Egypt crackdown.** Gaining pace since 'Queen Boat' arrests. Worse after the supposed Arabic Spring.
- Iraq (state sanctioned) **'murder squads.'**
- Emergence of the **Taliban in Afghanistan.**
- **Rise of far-right nationalism in Israeli elections** – can we continue to call it 'pink washed'?
- Signs of change...
- Lebanon's **'Helem.'**
- Gulf regions very 'status quo' with **significant underground movements.**
- Emerging **Queer Arab** identities and reconciliation of sexuality, gender identity, expression and Islam.



# Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

- Easy to suppose it is a region of ‘hot homophobia’ but it’s **much more complex than this.**
- Mozambique, Angola, Botswana, Cape Verde, Lesotho, Sudan, all decriminalized or removed the death penalty. **Many states never criminalised same-sex activity historically or have strengthened laws (South Africa).**
- A 2016 Afrobarometer opinion poll found that **55% of Namibians** would welcome, or would not be bothered by having, a ‘homosexual neighbour.’
- Things are changing across the continent due to a **youthful demographic, engaged within activism, and connected increasingly globally.**
- However, the **‘conservative international’** holds significant power here. See: Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act (2023) and Kenya...



**Queer flight**  
**Kakuma Refugee Camp**



# The role of the UN?

- **1995:** The Fourth World Conference for Women (Beijing). Proposed language of 'sexual orientation' was eventually dropped from the text, it was the first-time governments took a public and explicit stance.
- **2003:** Brazil presented a resolution prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Postponed.
- **2006:** Yogyakarta Principles developed (29 principles).
- **2011:** The UN Human Rights Council expressed 'grave concern' at acts of violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Backed up with the first evidence-based report.
- **2013:** The UN launched 'Free & Equal', a global campaign designed to raise awareness of homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination.
- **2016:** UNHRC adopted the UN's first Independent Expert.
- **2017:** Yogyakarta Principles updated with 10 additional principles (the +10). Not adopted by the UN, but have been used by governments, UN departments, and court judgements.
- **The UN is changing. SOGIESC issues are rising to prominence, with nation states revealing which side of the pink line they are part of, and sometimes even changing sides.**



**Climate change**  
**The Jamaican 'Gully Queens'**



# Overall?

- Dramatic **change is happening** to sexual and gender minorities across the globe.
- Much **of this is positive**, even in regions where we have seen traditional 'hot' homophobia.
- However, a **pink line has been drawn** which exists within nation states and is also external to them.
- But this **pink line changes often**, and is guided by global forces, narratives, governments, and power structures.
- The impact of this pink line is felt strongly by sexual and gender minorities, **both positively and negatively** – certainly not evenly.
- Its time to extend our allyship to global **LGBTQI+ organisations** and to recognise that we are all increasingly connected on the global stage. **Fundraise, support, attend, involve.**







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