The Pink Line:
What is happening to sexual and gender minorities globally? How can we be an ally?

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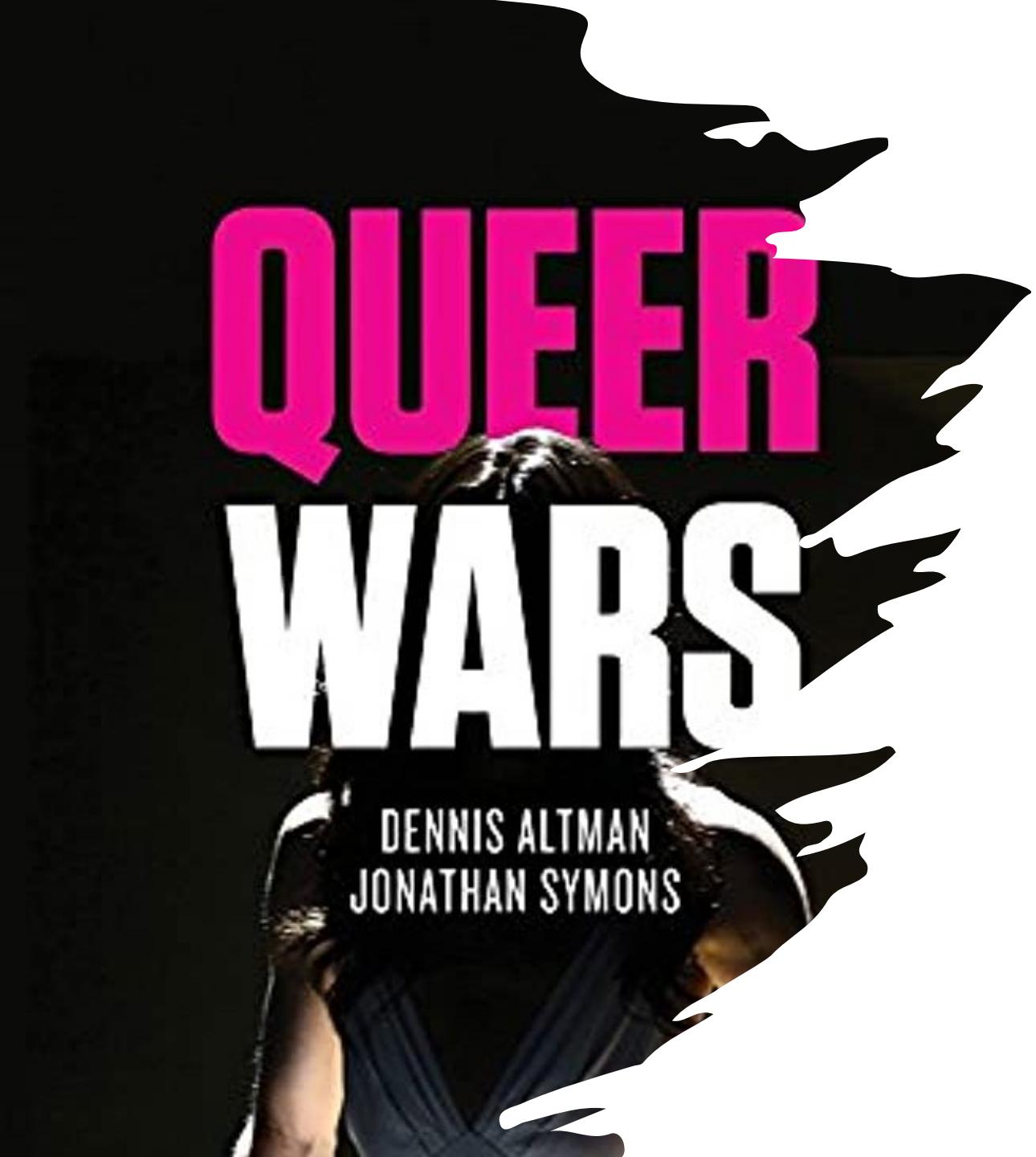
The world is getting better for LGBTQI+ human rights!

But this is not being felt evenly across the globe…

Where do you feel it is unsafe to be LGBTQI+ across the globe, right now?

Why do you think this?

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

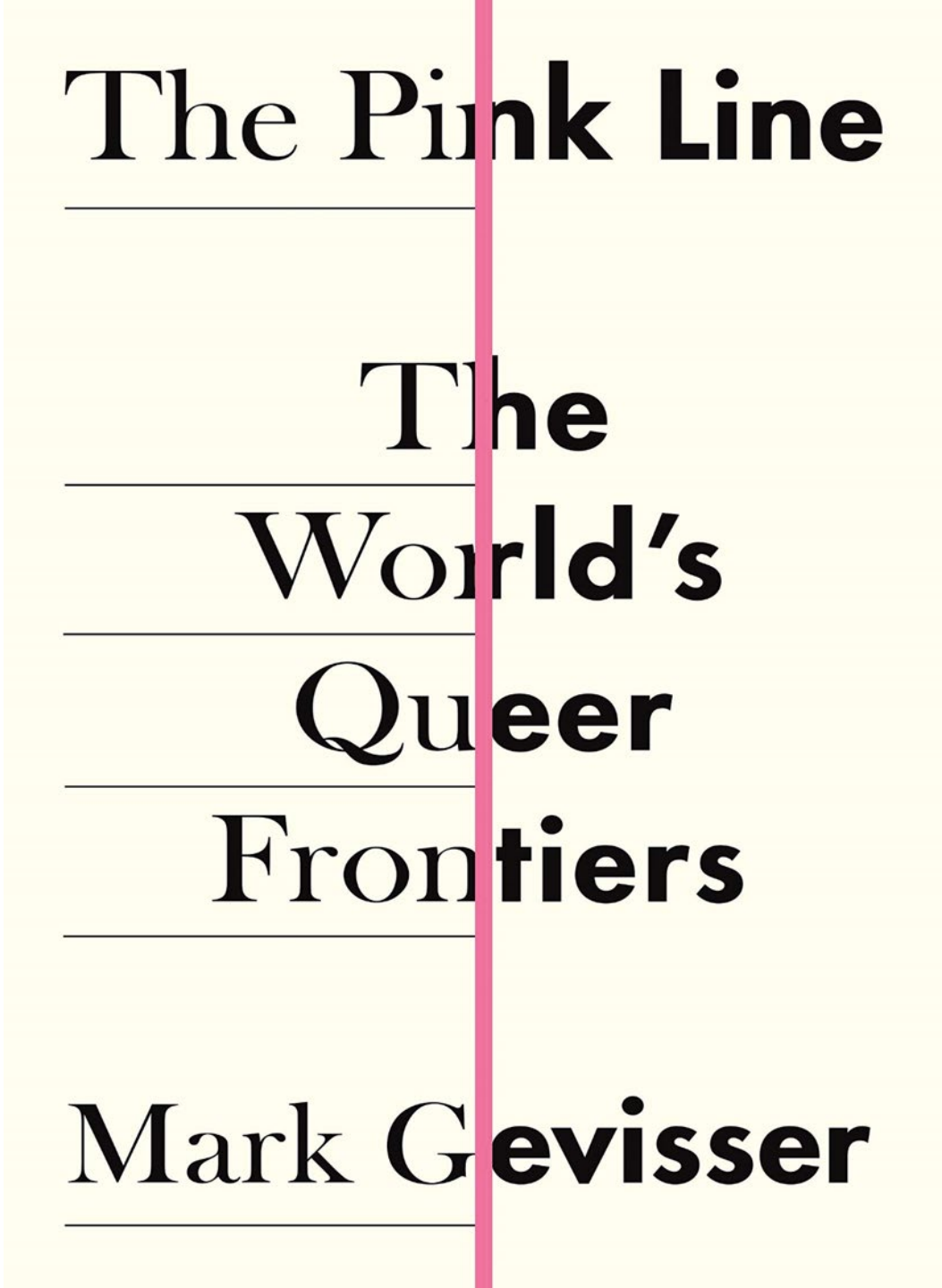


‘Queer Wars’
(Altman and Symon, 2016)

- 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 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.



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?

RAINBOW EUROPE MAP 2023

REFLECTING THE LEGAL AND POLICY HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS AND INTERSEX (LGBTI) PEOPLE IN EUROPE

ILGA EUROPE

100%
95%
90%
85%
80%
75%
70%
65%
60%
55%
50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%

RESPECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, FULL EQUALITY

MALTA 89

BELGIUM / DENMARK 78
SPAIN 74
ICELAND 71
FINLAND 70
LUXEMBOURG / SWEDEN 68
NORWAY 67
FRANCE 63
PORTUGAL 62
MONTENEGRO 61
GREECE 57
NETHERLANDS 56
GERMANY 55
IRELAND 54
UNITED KINGDOM 53
CROATIA /AUSTRIA 49
SWITZERLAND 47
SLOVENIA 46

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 40
MOLDOVA 39
ANDORRA 37
ESTONIA 36
SERBIA / KOSOVO*/ ALBANIA 35

CYPRUS 31
SLOVAKIA / HUNGARY 30
NORTH MACEDONIA 29

CZECHIA 26
ITALY / GEORGIA 25
LITHUANIA 24

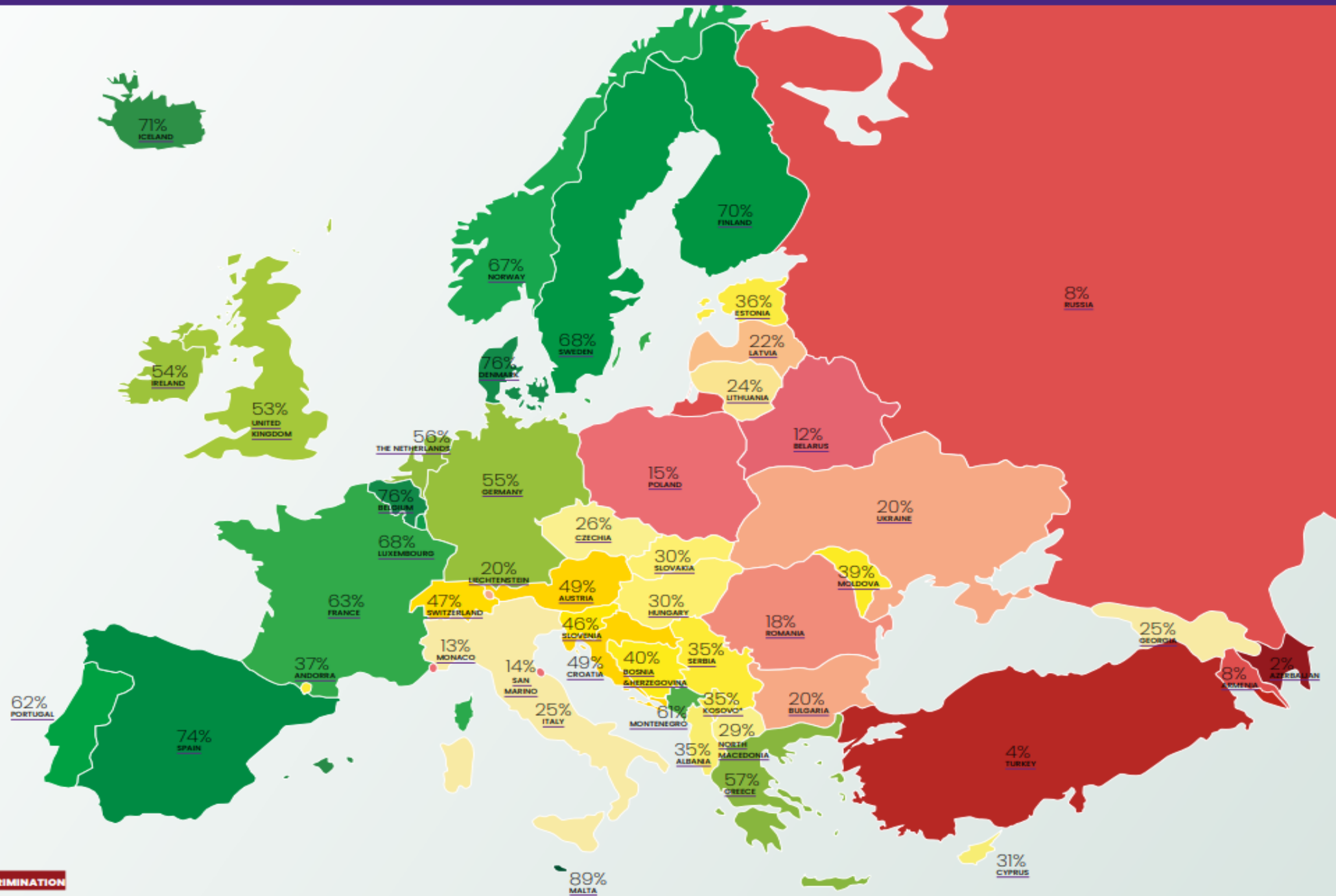
LATVIA 22
LIECHTENSTEIN / UKRAINE / BULGARIA 20
ROMANIA 18

POLAND 15
SAN MARINO 14
MONACO 13
BELARUS 12

RUSSIA /ARMENIA 8

TURKEY 4
AZERBAIJAN 2

GROSS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, DISCRIMINATION

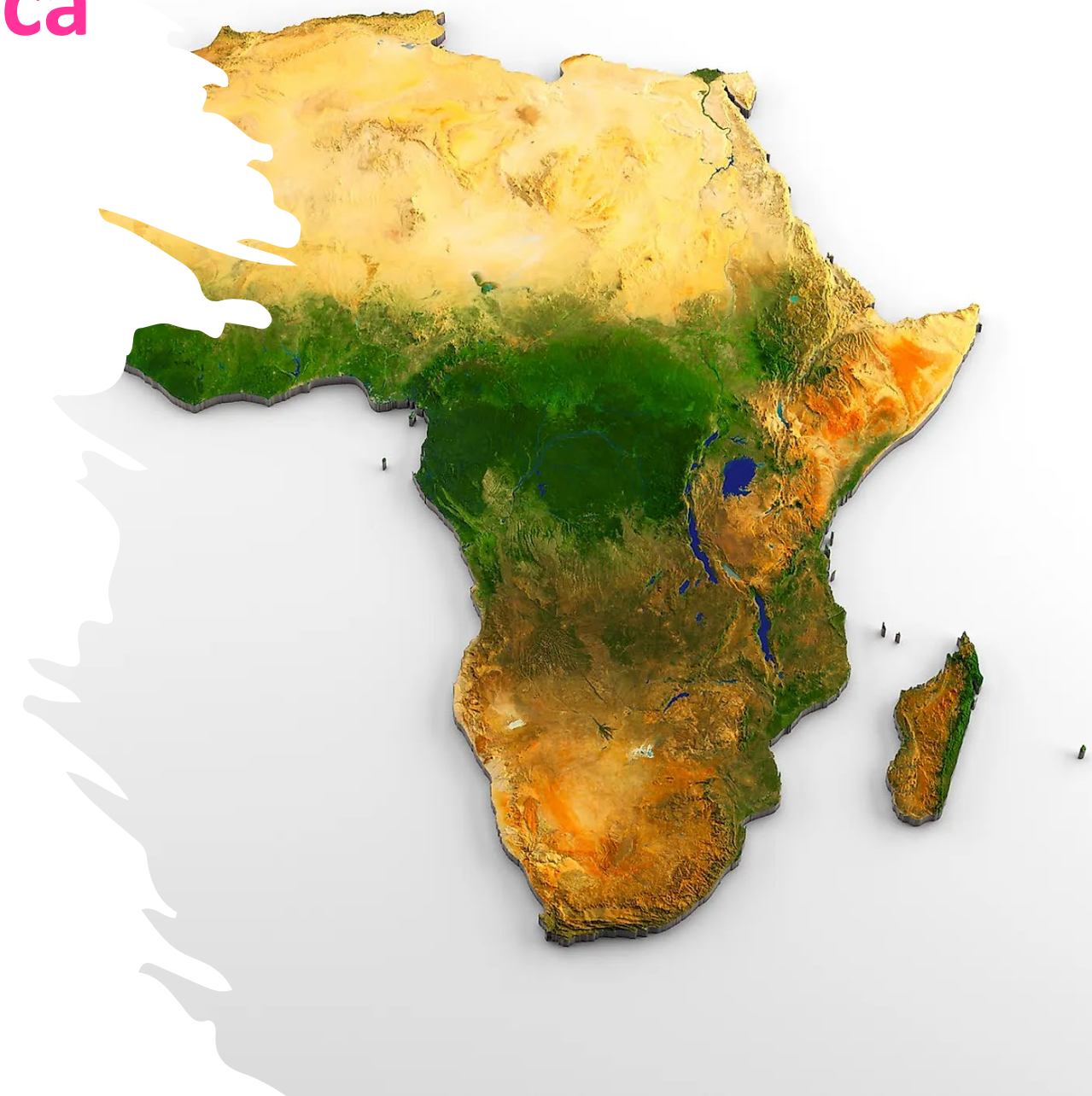


Region: MENA

- 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

Ignored by humanitarian aid

The Indian ‘Aravani’

Corrective rape and conversion treatments Worldwide

Restricted healthcare

Nigeria and Uganda

Gender ‘Affirming’ Surgery

Iran

Transgender murders

Central and South America

1995 in Beijing onwards

The United Nations

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.

How to become an ally?

- There are only a handful of global LGBTQI+ human rights organisations working at a global level.
- Recognise: involve us in discussions. The global affects the local and vice versa.
- Fundraise: we are poorly supported. Sponsor our work if possible.
- Join us: follow us, volunteer for us, attend our events, and learn more about what we do. Bring your professional skills.
- Accept: See how we are part of a global LGBTQI+ human rights movement, and that changing human rights elsewhere impact on the rights of others.
- Consider: When you are working with people from different nation states, what might they have faced in terms of being LGBTQI+?

- **Report. Inform. Defend.**

ReportOUT