

Never before has the quest for equal rights been so much in demand, than in the times that currently lay before us, be it in Europe, the Americas, Asia or Africa, the quest for LGBTI rights is at the moment global, and gone are the times where repression and suppression is left unchallenged....

The waves of change are stronger than ever; there is a need for freedom and space for our expression as human beings; a need to rise to the demands and challenges of the times; the need to remember that we are living in the 21st century. As human rights activists and advocates, our job is to steer and influence the acknowledgement of these rights, at all angles and using all opportunities available; to know and spread the knowledge that these are indeed rights inherent to us as human beings, not rights granted or given as a token. And then again, this is not just the work and effort for activists, it's everybody's job, everyone's responsibility and obligation.

I come from a country that has yet to recognize LGBTI persons as a part of society. A country where drafting of laws criminalizing homosexuality is deeply shameful for us as a people, but also a very unfortunate part of our history. It is not only embarrassing, but also a clear sign of the failure to understand the true nature of humanity. A humanity that is based on understanding the diversity that is inherent in us as humans. Sadly, this takes us many steps back, as opposed to steps forward.

Gone are the times when it was okay to cast LGBTI people as a social disgrace! Over time, we have demonstrated that we are human rights defenders, respected and respectful, progressive, and contribute, like anyone else, to the societies we come from. And this respect is what we demand back! This is not negotiable! Since human rights are not a matter of negotiation, neither are they a reward from fellow human beings. Human rights are inalienable and fundamental. Human rights are based on tolerance and understanding the concept of diversity that we come to this world with...

As we celebrate Pride in Zurich this week, we need to reflect on why we celebrate Pride, on why it is called Pride to begin with. For some of us it is because LGBTI persons, wherever we may be, show the world that we are not ashamed of who we are, we show the world the beautiful nature of sexual diversity, and because Pride is one of the key moments when we celebrate our existence as a people. And we should not forget that it's also a time for those still oppressed because of their sexuality, because of their gender and gender identity, to take more courage and rise up to the moment; To look forward and to positively advance in society. To break barriers and social hindrances through knowing that respect for one another is part of what we can truly celebrate as human beings.

It is therefore very important for us to remember, that as we celebrate at times such as this one, the battle is not over. We need to celebrate pride in Iran, in Nigeria, in Russia and many other parts of the world.

And in Uganda, we are going to celebrate pride indeed!

There is a need to continuously engage all decision makers and leaders in social, political and economic spaces and at all levels, to influence them to acknowledge and understand the importance of equal rights for LGBTI persons; And then it is the obligation of these decision makers and leaders to make the effort of shifting and of opening up to the reality of our existence, our presence, and our right to be; and of the imperative for developing mutual respect. As LGBTI activists and defenders of human rights, we are not stopping our battle! We shall push forward for the better good of our communities, and for the better good of the world. As the freedom fighters that led you to this celebration many years ago. The LGBT struggle is no longer about equality but a liberation struggle. Today let us march for those who cannot.

And the message to all of those who violate human rights out there - the world is watching, and change is coming..../Thank you Queer Amnesty and Zurich Pride for Inviting me. I wish all of you a wonderful and happy Pride.