



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 20, 2019

Foreign Policy Overreach: Trump's Campaign to Decriminalize Homosexuality

President Trump has launched a global campaign to end criminalization of homosexuality in countries where homosexual activity is illegal, [NBC News reports](#). But while the effort may be considered a noble one, there is little hope that it will win the administration any support from the LGBTQ community. Instead, the campaign merely exemplifies the overreach of America's foreign policy and has the potential to do untold damage to alliances.



The campaign is being led by U.S. Ambassador to Germany Richard Grenell, an openly gay official in the Trump administration. As part of the effort, the U.S. embassy is bringing in LGBT activists from Europe for a dinner at which guests will discuss strategies to advocate for decriminalization in places such as the Middle East and Africa. Officials contend that the campaign will likely require input from global organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union, as well as from individual countries where homosexual activity is not illegal. The focus will remain on decriminalization and not on broader issues such as same-sex marriage and other LGBT issues.

"It is concerning that, in the 21st century, some 70 countries continue to have laws that criminalize LGBTI status or conduct," said a U.S. official involved in organizing the dinner.

The campaign is largely in response to the recent hanging of a young homosexual male in Iran.

"This is not the first time the Iranian regime has put a gay man to death with the usual outrageous claims of prostitution, kidnapping, or even pedophilia. And it sadly won't be the last time," Grenell asserted. "Barbaric public executions are all too common in a country where consensual homosexual relationships are criminalized and punishable by flogging and death."

He added that "politicians, the U.N., democratic governments, diplomats and good people everywhere should speak up — and loudly."

Grenell and the Trump administration are hopeful that redirecting Europe's attention to the human rights outrages in Iran will generate more support from Europe for U.S. opposition to Iran. But NBC observes that the administration may be playing a dangerous game, as focusing on LGBT rights in Iran could also expose other close U.S. allies such as Saudi Arabia to criticism and potentially hurt alliances. And despite Grenell's efforts to protect homosexuals from abuse in other nations, members of the LGBTQ community seemingly have no interest in approving of anything the Trump administration does and are decrying the campaign as "racist."

Staff writer Matthew Rodriguez at *Out* magazine is accusing the Trump administration of using an "old racist tactic."



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“While on its surface, the move looks like an atypically benevolent decision by the Trump administration, the details of the campaign belie a different story,” Rodriguez began.

“Rather than actually being about helping queer people around the world, Trump’s campaign looks more like another instance of the right using queer people as a pawn to amass power and enact its own agenda,” Rodriguez continued.

“The truth is, this is part of an old colonialist handbook. In her essay, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak coined the term ‘White men saving brown women from brown men’ to describe the racist, paternalistic process by which colonizing powers would decry the way men in power treated oppressed groups, like women, to justify attacking them,” wrote Rodriguez. “Spivak was referencing the British colonial agenda in India. But Grennell’s attack might be a case of white men trying to save brown gay men from brown straight men, to the same end.”

Rodriguez ultimately contends that the administration’s campaign is ultimately an anti-Muslim one disguised as pro-LGBTQ:

Grennell’s sudden interest in Iran’s anti-gay laws is strikingly similar to Trump’s rhetoric after the 2016 Pulse massacre in Orlando, Florida. After the deadly shooting, Trump used the 49 deaths as a way to galvanize support for an anti-Muslim agenda rather than find a way to support LGBTQ+ people. In pushing for immigration restrictions and a Muslim ban, Trump argued, he was the true pro-LGBTQ+ candidate. Rather than honor those who died, Trump used the tragedy as a way to stoke fear among the American people, and Grennell is taking similar actions with Iran — trying to reach an economic goal by painting the administration’s opponent as anti-gay.

In other words, no matter where President Trump falls on any of the issues, those on the Left will always perceive his actions as inflammatory and offensive.

As mentioned above, the campaign has the potential to hurt U.S. relations with some of its other Middle Eastern allies and exacerbate already-strained relations with Iran. It also compels critics of the Trump administration to question a foreign policy that seems to have a double standard for different countries, *The Daily Beast* reports.

“If this commitment is real, we have a lot of questions about their intentions and commitments, and are eager to see what proof and action will follow,” said Human Rights Campaign senior international policy advocate Jeremy Kadden in a statement.

“Donald Trump and Mike Pence have turned a blind eye to a campaign of violence and murder targeting LGBTQ people in Chechnya that has stretched on for two years,” said Kadden. “They have turned away LGBTQ people fleeing violence and persecution and sent them back to countries that criminalize them, and have consistently worked to undermine the fundamental equality of LGBTQ people and our families here at home from day one.”

Perhaps worst of all, it sets a precedent for intervention into the domestic affairs of sovereign countries by other nations.

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