



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 7, 2011

## Obama to Use Foreign Aid to Effect Gay Rights Abroad

President Obama made his intentions clear in a memo circulated yesterday, directing American agencies working abroad to use foreign aid to help homosexuals abroad who face human rights violations.

"I am deeply concerned by the violence and discrimination targeting L.G.B.T. [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] persons around the world," Obama averred in the memorandum, "whether it is passing laws that criminalize L.G.B.T. status, beating citizens simply for joining peaceful L.G.B.T. pride celebrations, or killing men, women and children for their perceived sexual orientation."



He also directed U.S. agencies to protect gay and lesbian refugees and those who are seeking asylum.

In a recent statement, the President observed, "The struggle to end discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons is a global challenge, and one that is central to the United States' commitment to promoting human rights."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also spoke on the White House agenda at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva.

"Some have suggested that gay rights and human rights are separate and distinct," she told the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, according to the [New York Times](#), "but in fact they are one and the same."

"In reality, gay people are born into — and belong to — every society in the world," she said. In countries "where people are jailed, beaten or executed for being gay," she called on leaders to leap ahead of their constituents' cultural or social mores, if necessary.

"I'm not saying that gay people can't or don't commit crimes," she said. "They can and do, just like straight people. And when they do, they should be held accountable. But it should never be a crime to be gay."

The *New York Times* reported:

The administration's announcement formalizes several steps that Mrs. Clinton has already ordered. She has asked American diplomats to raise the issue wherever harassment or abuse arises and required a record of them in the State Department's annual report on human rights. On Tuesday, she also announced a \$3 million program to finance gay-rights organizations to combat discrimination, violence and other abuses.

The initiative followed a series of legal steps taken against homosexuals in countries such as Uganda, where the government has outlawed homosexuality and made it punishable by death.

The State Department's latest human rights report enumerates cases of violations against gays in



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dozens of countries.

The *Associated Press* indicates that Obama's directive applies to all agencies involved in foreign aid, assistance, and development, such as the Departments of State, Treasury, Defense, and Homeland Security.

According to *The Blaze*, despite the touted intent of such an initiative, the Obama administration has reelection in mind: "It comes as no surprise that many analysts believe that President Obama's outreach to gays and lesbians, a core Democratic constituency, is part of his 2012 reelection campaign."

Still, the LGBT community was not satisfied by the latest initiative, asserting it lacks any explanation of how human violations against gays and lesbians will be curbed.

"Neither Mr. Obama nor Mrs. Clinton specified how to give the initiative teeth," wrote Steven Myers and Helene Cooper of the *Times*.

Caitlin Hayden, spokeswoman for the National Security Council, admits that foreign aid will not be cut or tied into changes in the practices of other nations, so just how foreign aid will be used to affect a change in human rights violations against homosexuals remains to be seen.

However, the *New York Times* credits Obama with at least "raising the issue to such prominence on the administration's foreign policy agenda."

Texas Governor Rick Perry responded to the President's memo: "President Obama has again mistaken America's tolerance for different lifestyles with an endorsement of those lifestyles."

The initiative may strain relationships between the United States and other nations, such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia, where homosexuality is a crime, in some cases punishable by death.

During Secretary of State Clinton's speech before the United Nations, she alluded to these nations when she said, "The obstacles standing in the way of protecting the human rights [of homosexuals] rest on deeply held personal, political, cultural and religious beliefs."

Aware of the predictably negative response such an initiative would provoke from nations with strict anti-homosexual laws, Neil Grungas, founder of the San Francisco-based organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration — a group representing gay asylum-seekers — said, "This cannot be seen as a U.S.-only issue because at the end of the day that would be counter-productive. In countries where U.S. moral leadership is not high and where increasingly Western values are negative ... there is a real danger people can use this issue and say, 'No, we are cleaning up here, we are going to reject this American imposition of decay.'"

Still, the initiative led by Obama and Clinton pleased some groups, including Truth Wins Out, an organization that monitors religious organizations with so-called anti-gay views. Wayne Besen, the group's founder, was pleased by the administration's willingness to call out nations such as Uganda and Iran for what Besen calls a "declared war on sexual minorities."

"This was one of those times where our nation demonstrated true international leadership and made me incredibly proud to be an American," Besen said. "There were no carefully crafted and focus grouped code words that sugarcoated the abuses — just the honest truth spoken from the heart."



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