

Human Rights 75 joint civil society pledge

Adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the proclamation that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. It goes on to provide that all human rights must be afforded to everyone, without discrimination, and to recognize that all are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection against discrimination.

Yet in 2023, 75 years on from the Declaration’s adoption, it is estimated that more than half of the countries in the world do not have laws which provide effective and comprehensive protection from all forms of discrimination, on all grounds and in all areas of life.

Last year, the United Nations published, for the the first time, clear, complete and authoritative guidance for States on the laws which they must pass to meet their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the rights to equality and non-discrimination and to deliver their ambitions to leave no one behind. The [Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation](#) states, unequivocally, that UN member states must enact and implement comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, and sets out the necessary elements of such laws. On Human Rights Day 2022, the [High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) called on states to use this Guide to “renew and reinforce their commitments to the equal enjoyment of human rights through enacting, enforcing and implementing comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation”.

International law requires the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws – laws which have the purpose and effect of eliminating all forms of discrimination and realising equality for all. Comprehensive anti-discrimination laws prohibit all forms of discrimination, on the basis of an extensive and open-ended list of grounds, and in all areas of life regulated by law; provide the necessary procedural mechanisms to ensure equal and effective access to justice, remedy and sanction; and which require and provide for the full range of proactive and positive measures required to eliminate discrimination and advance equality for all.

In the absence of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws, states are unable to meet their commitments to ensure that all human beings can live free and equal in dignity and rights. Without these laws, the promise of the Universal Declaration will not be fulfilled.

On the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, we call on UN member states to commit to a decade of action on equality and non-discrimination.

We call on all states which have yet to develop comprehensive anti-discrimination laws to do so, and we call on states which are in the process of developing these laws to accelerate this process.

We call in particular on the states in which we – the signatories – are based, to prioritise the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws. Such laws should be developed in close consultation with those exposed to discrimination and should be aligned with the United Nations guidance.

We commit ourselves to working towards the adoption of laws which provide protection from all forms of discrimination on all grounds and in all areas of life, and which address all of the legacies and consequences of discrimination. We commit to pursue equality for all and to do so in movements which are inclusive and where all can participate equally. **We pledge to work for the enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and call on our governments to do the same.**

Signed:

Equal Rights Trust
Federación Argentina LGBT+, **Argentina**
Non-Discrimination and Equality Coalition, **Armenia**

Nagorik Uddyog, **Bangladesh**

Defensoria Pública da União, **Brazil**

Alliance of Iraqi Minorities Network, **Iraq**

International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism, **Japan**

South Korean Coalition for Anti-discrimination Legislation, **Republic of Korea**

Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, **Kazakhstan**

Coalition for Equality, **Kyrgyzstan**

Stop the Discrimination Coalition, the **Philippines**