International Dialogue on the intersections of culture and tradition with human rights related to gender and sexuality

Istanbul, Turkey February 19–22, 2016

FINAL REPORT

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All participants for sharing their stories, strategies, victories and struggles - for their inspirational activism and advocacy.
Introduction

From 19–22 February 2016 more than 60 activists gathered in Istanbul, Turkey from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and from across the world to join the International Dialogue on the intersections of culture/tradition with human rights related to gender and sexuality.

A joint initiative of ARC International and MantiQitna, the Dialogue was aimed at meeting the following objectives:

1. Enhance the capacity of groups in the MENA region to document, report and advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) human rights;
2. Share and develop strategies about working in criminalizing environments globally with legal experts, activists, academics and allied movements;
3. Develop solid and reinforcing linkages between national, regional and international advocacy;
4. Develop, in consultation with regional partners, initiatives to implement and follow-up on the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), and strategies to address resolutions on traditional values and protection of the family.

A full copy of the agenda is included in Annex I.

Background and goals

This collaboration was the result of discussions between ARC International and the MantiQitna Network who had worked together in international spaces for several years, and more recently around the successful passage of a new SOGI resolution at the UN Human Rights Council. While celebrating these successes, both organizations noted the absence of support from States in the MENA region and the growing efforts by States in the region to undermine these successes with parallel initiatives focused around notions of “tradition”, “culture” and “protection of the family”.

Both organizations felt that the time was right to build on the successful models of such networkings done by both MantiQitna and ARC in the form of QamBs (annual meetings by queer Arabs from the region) MantiQitna and the International Dialogue to engage in further capacity enhancement and strategic dialogue both within the region, but also with defenders and activists from around the world engaged in similar work.

The common goals of the two organizations were to build strategic regional and
global alliances to address persecution, criminalisation and discrimination, not just in the MENA region, but across the world. Activists in the region had also identified that strong documentation and reporting strategies were a fundamental basis for this work and wished to develop capacity in this area. They also indicated that they wanted to share best practices around addressing issues of religion and culture, and work more effectively at the regional and international level, with other organisations doing similar work.

The aim of the Dialogue from the point of view of ARC International, MantiQitna and participating organizations and activists was to reach these goals and meet these needs.

Partners

ARC International
Since 2003, ARC International has been advancing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights at the international level. ARC seeks to facilitate strategic planning around LGBT issues internationally, strengthening global networks, and enhancing access to UN mechanisms. With a full-time presence in Geneva, ARC has played a key role in advancing LGBT issues within the UN human rights system, and was closely involved in the development of the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

ARC has been successful in engaging UN mechanisms around sexual orientation and gender identity issues, and bringing international support to the work of NGOs in countries around the world. ARC's International Dialogues have brought together activists from diverse regions to share information, strategies and best practices. These strategic opportunities have been successfully hosted in Brazil, Geneva, South Korea, South Africa and Argentina.

Full information on ARC’s history, staff background, annual reports and previous dialogue reports are available on our website at http://arc-international.net/

MantiQitna Network
MantiQitna is a network of activists who come from and/or live within the region that is often referred to as “the Middle East and North Africa.”

The name “MantiQitna” was chosen because it emphasizes the connectivity between its members, outside the confines of ethnic identities and arbitrary borders. Currently, it is best known for MantiQitna Qamb, which is a yearly meeting of queer Arab activists from the region, and a dynamic platform for learning, exchange, debate, and discussion. First held in 2010, the initial purpose
and format of the QamB evolved from more traditional ideas of capacity building and trainings to a more organic and flexible space that offers queer activists the opportunity to come together, exchange, connect, and discuss the personal and political issues that are often neglected because of the pressing demands of day to day work.

MantiQitna’s vision is to be a platform for the support and development of activists, and the MantiQitna idea stems from the conviction that knowledge, skills, and information should be shared and disseminated through a bottom-up approach. The network also believes that learning and real connection happen best in flexible, participant-driven frameworks, breaking with traditional methods of exchange such as conferences and trainings.

Information on the network and MantiQitna Qamb, along with the most recent audited report can be found on our website at http://www.mantiqitna.org

**Methodology**

The Dialogue and the documentation training used a variety of methodologies to achieve their goals, including innovative training techniques with an adult education framework. They featured facilitated plenary, fishbowl, world café and small group and regional caucus sessions, with report-back and feedback opportunities. There were also opportunities to share best practices and analyse the application of cross-regional strategies and their limitations. They heavily relied on the expertise of local and international human rights defenders engaged in front-line work with documentation of human rights violations, and those with expertise in advocacy for various domestic, regional and international mechanisms.

The partners developed the agenda (Annex I) to achieve the objectives listed above. These activities were finalised following further consultation with confirmed participants.

The main activities were a one-day training and a three-day dialogue in Istanbul between 19-22 February 2016. The Dialogue was conducted in three languages: Arabic, English, and Spanish.

**Participants**

Participants were jointly selected by ARC and MantiQitna. A call for applications was circulated on a number of key listservs, on social media, and through extensive personal outreach, announcing the event and inviting activists to apply.
Particular consideration was given to activists working in the MENA region and to groups that can foster further regional networking and cooperation. Participants also included activists from other regions who are involved in national advocacy and engagement with regional and international mechanisms.

It was a priority to ensure a diverse pool of participants with respect to gender identity, trans and intersex status, as well as regional representation. A total of 65 participants joined the Dialogue, from the following countries:

Bahrain, Burundi, Tanzania, Botswana, South Africa, Malawi, Nigeria, Ghana, UK, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Turkey, Syria, Switzerland, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Iran, Germany, Jordan, Kuwait, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Palestine, Lebanon, Australia, Kenya, Belgium, Netherlands, Argentina, Canada, United States, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Sweden, and France.

Documentation Training for MENA region participants (ARC, COC and MantiQitna)

Sharing Practices on Monitoring and Documentation: Roundtable session

In this session participants shared their experiences with monitoring and documentation. Many of the organizations that activists came from have been doing monitoring and documentation work for years (e.g. Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt), focusing on abuses against LGBTI people by family members, State actors, or the community. The violations documented included murders, arrests, imprisonment or discrimination in employment, education, and health care. A number of organizations have a special focus on documenting violations against LGBTI refugees (e.g. Egypt, Turkey), others focus on trans people (e.g. Iran, Kuwait, Egypt, Lebanon) or women (Egypt). Some have used their documentation to lobby international mechanisms, including UN Treaty bodies, the UPR, or UN agencies such as UNHCR (e.g. Turkey or Iran). The geographic scope of the work varied, including local, national, and multi-country documentation. Several participants are based outside their home countries and do their documentation work from abroad (e.g. Syrian, Iranian, Sudanese or Algerian activists). The methods used included legal and social documentation, video documentation, and life narratives. Some participants expressed their need to learn about standard methodologies that could support them in their documentation and monitoring work.
Monitoring and Documentation: What would you like to achieve?
- small group brainstorming on goals, methods, and communication strategies

>> Goals:
It is crucial to always be clear about the purposes of our documentation and monitoring work and to identify these purposes at the outset of our activities. This is particularly important, because this kind of work is rather time consuming.

Documentation can serve the purposes of changing laws at the national level, helping increase public awareness, directly exerting pressure on the government and holding them accountable for human rights violations. Activists can also use it to inform international mechanisms about abuses taking place on the ground and therefore indirectly lobbying their government.

It is useful to differentiate between short and long-term goals. Sensitizing society could be a long-term goal, while sharing some cases of violence with the broader public could be one, smaller step that supports our work towards the long-term goal.

>> Examples of specific goals:
- Tackle violations faced by LGBT Arab refugees in Turkey
- Prevent Imams from verbally abusing LGBT people in mosques in Lebanon
- Overturn the death penalty for homosexuality in Iran
- Overturn imprisonment for homosexuality in Morocco and Lebanon
- Fight transphobia within the LGB community.

>> Methodology:
The methods always depend on our goals and audience. Influencing the public or the government will require very different tools. We may use the following methods to document human rights violations
- reports
- interviews and conversations
- official documents from courts and police stations
- copies from lawyers involved in the case
- videos, etc.

It is important to document a case from the beginning to end, for instance from the time of arrest to detention or imprisonment. It is crucial to always conduct background research: we need to know the root causes and the impact of the violations.
Communication strategy:
We need to consider what our goals and target audience are and tailor our communication strategy accordingly. Once we have our documented cases in place, we need to be strategic about how we will get this information out to our audience.

Some questions to consider: where do we want to post it? How do we handle abusive comments?

In Kuwait activists often communicate through social media anonymously. In Iran they do the work from outside the country.

In Sudan activists have worked with embassies and foreign cultural centers, but always had to be careful that organizing is done by local groups, so it does not seem like SOGII work is foreign intervention. As a negative example, there was an LGBTI themed event opened by the US embassy in Jordan last year, which created quite big problems for activists later.

Challenges:
- Victims may be afraid that documentation will escalate their situation and may be hesitant to take action which could potentially make things worse. In Turkey for instance, LGBTI refugees often shy away from their cases of abuses being documented. In a recent attempt to document such cases, only 12 of 30 persons agreed.
- When activists make documentation publicly available, they may receive a lot of hateful comments, which can hurt the community.
- Making abuses visible could direct the government’s attention to the community, which will put people in more danger.
- Documenting violations may place those doing the documentation work into danger, e.g. in Kuwait you could be imprisoned for pursuing anti-state activities.
- Activists lack lawyers to defend victims and financial support to pursue this work.

Exercise with Documentary: The Time Has Come
The goal of the documentary was to encourage UN States to follow up on the 2011 SOGI resolution by continuing to raise the issues, even when it is difficult to do so. UN representatives receive a lot of written documentation of violations, but activists felt that they should also see real people and hear from them how they are affected. The video was a good tool in making this happen.

The documentary used a number of methods:
- story telling
- documenting meetings at the UN and at the government level
During the session, participants shared their own examples of documentation work:

- **Iranian** activists compiled a documentary featuring LGBT people from Iran telling their stories. The goal was to make the community more visible and present the most common problems its members face. The film was a great tool to do this and it was viewed by thousands of people within days. This method was also very empowering - people who were featured were active subjects, not only passive victims.

- **Lebanese** activists documented cases of violence against LGBTI people, because they knew that this would resonate with the public even if they are hostile otherwise. The activists felt that documentation that speaks to people is just as important as legal documentation.

- **Canadian** activists campaigned for marriage equality using the Canadian Charter as their reference point - they knew that Canadians are very proud of it and could be convinced to support the cause more easily.

- In **Morocco**, activists wanted to break the silence and open up a dialogue about the arrests and detention of LGBT people in the country. They shot a film depicting the life of members of their community, including violence at home, homelessness, and arrests. The film had 300,000 views and went viral in national media. While some reactions continued to be negative, a lot of feedback spoke of more empathy and understanding.

Participants were debating whether showing cases of violence against LGBTI people prevents or increases future abuses. An activist based in Turkey felt videos depicting violence committed by ISIS may encourage others to attack LGBTI people or to post hateful comments as incitement. A Lebanese activist thought that such footage can result in people having more empathy towards LGBTI people and can also be used for international advocacy with the UN. This is particularly important in contexts where there may be no point in sending such information to the government. An Iranian activist added that such violent footage should only be re-shared with critical commentary and an initiative to open up a discussion. A Moroccan activist added that ideally, such commentary should come from locals, and not international organizations. A Sudanese activist added that documentation can be a useful tool to change attitudes in society, but this process will take years and activists need to be aware of that.
Examining Root Causes and Consequences: Using goals from group brainstorming to build “Solution Trees” in World Café Style

In this session participants broke into small groups, worked with flip charts, identified one or two key problem issues they wanted to work on, and developed a “tree” to capture their discussions. This visual exercise provided participants with a clear overview of known root causes and also the effects of a given problem, whilst providing the opportunity to generate action plans in order to achieve a solution.

Turning documentation into legal arguments: India case study

*The full presentation is available at http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/

The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting. Through documenting abuses, activists create memory of suffering that can be used to prevent further abuses. Documentation and fact finding can be strategies to tackle root causes of human rights issues.

In this session, Arvind Narrain shared one particular example of documentation work from India. Working with a mainstream human rights organization LGBT activists documented cases of brutal violence against the transgender community. The violence documented was inflicted by the police, vigilante elements, families and the general public. The Report did not stop at exposing a systematic pattern of violence which was underreported in the Indian context but went on to ask the
question as to why the violence was happening. The answers as to the ‘why’ of violence included a legal framework based on discrimination and criminalisation as well as lack of empathy in the larger media, medical establishment and public for issues of gender identity. The Report which was called, ‘Human Rights Violations Against the transgender community’ became an advocacy tool which had the following goals:

1. Stopping violence and harassment by police.
2. Starting a discussion: LGBTI issues were often surrounded by secrecy and shame. Now it became possible to speak about transgender issues.
3. Changing the language: the report used human rights language (privacy, dignity, freedom for torture), which was a useful way to get more allies.

Methods: The report featured testimonies from victims, and interviews with police officers, which increased its credibility. It documented enough cases to show that the violations were ongoing and systemic.

Communication strategy: Activists had to consider who publishes the report – in some cases it may be smarter to publish your report through a more mainstream human rights organization, and not as an LGBTI group. This was the strategy followed by activists in India when the report on Human rights violations against the transgender community was published under the aegis of the People’s Union for Civil Liberties.

What could be the impact of a report?
- expose violators, e.g. name police officers who perpetrated the violations so they are individually shamed.
- make a story visible – if you report a concrete case, the media can pick it up
- provide evidence that violence is systemic (if it goes beyond one case)
- provide language to talk about LGBTI issues (not just in terms of identity and expression but in terms of violation of dignity and equality)
- speak truth to power (you create an ethical, moral counter-voice to the voice of the powerful)
- Documentation becomes one of the key tools in the struggle for decriminalization (Case 377).

Other things to consider:
- Documentation can include a wide range of sources, including diary entries, social media posts, articles, official reports, etc.
- Documentation is only useful if you know how to use it well, e.g. you may present it to the media who can put pressure on the police and help hold them accountable.
Some participants raised the concern that in some MENA countries documentation work and presenting cases to the public can put activists in serious danger. Arvind acknowledged these concerns, but shared that there was a similar sense of deep secrecy in India when organizing started in the late 1990s. People were afraid they would be abused by police. They started the work by cooperating with other human rights groups as allies and relying on the language of the Constitution, which was useful. Activists can always feed information to international organizations and stay anonymous.

Introduction to regional and UN human rights mechanisms: Team Competition Exercise

Participants formed small groups, established team “identities”, and took part in a competitive (iPad-based) team exercise about the basic concepts of the UN human rights system. This exercise demystified UN terminology and concepts in a fun, interactive environment, while also allowing participants to draw upon and use their own knowledge in a non-intimidating format.

From documentation to reporting for regional and international human rights bodies

*The full presentation is available at http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/

Approaching the UN, you should first choose what action you want from your documentation:

I. Urgent, straightforward reporting, and open to all, but perhaps with the least amount of enforceability. (Special Mechanisms)

II. Longer term, but predictable, still fairly straightforward reporting, open to all, and slightly more enforceability if your government is persuaded by other governments. (Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and State reporting)

III. Even more long-term, not as predictable, more in-depth reporting, only open to ratifying countries, but outcomes become part of international law. (Treaty Bodies)

I. Special Procedures

The UN has Special Procedures, and the African system has Special Mechanisms.

● independent experts, which means they do not get paid for this work
● tasked to monitor and report on human rights violations (either thematically or by country – UN only). The African system only has thematic mandates.
• they can receive urgent appeals, e.g. when someone is imprisoned – they can communicate concerns to States, seek their response
• SPs report to both the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly SMs report to African Commission
• can also raise awareness through public statements, country visits, participation in panels and expert seminars (e.g. Yogyakarta Principles).

There are three main kinds of communications available to the Special Procedures.
• **Allegation letters** - deal with human rights situations that have already occurred.
• **Urgent appeals**, by contrast, are designed as emergency tools, to bring a halt to ongoing violations or prevent violations likely to occur.
• **Policy/legislative communications** are sent to register concern that an existing or proposed policy or piece of legislation has or will impact on the enjoyment of rights by certain members of the population.

All types of communication may be sent by individual Special Procedure or by a combination of them. You do not need to know which Special Procedures you need to reach, you can just send an email to the general address. In the African system however, you should write to the particular Special Mandate Holders.

You are advised to always let international NGOs and the LGBTI unit of OHCHR know that you made a submission!

In the UN system, the MENA Region is currently represented by the following Special Procedures:
• Ms. Houria ES SLAMI (Morocco) (Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances)
• Mr. Saeed MOKBIL (Yemen) (Working Group on the use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination)
• Mr. Idriss JAZAIRY (Algeria) (Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights)
• Mr. Mohammed AYAT (Morocco) (Independent Expert on capacity–building and technical cooperation with Côte d’Ivoire in the field of human rights)
• Mr. Suliman BALDO (Sudan) (Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali)
• Mr. Aristide NONONSI (Benin) (Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan)
Previous Special Procedures can be important allies for SOGII advocacy. To see the full list of past mandate holders from the MENA region, see the presentation on ARC’s website.

>> Confidentiality:
Generally the identity of the source of information is kept confidential. If you want to make sure you and your organization are not named, you have to let the Special Procedures know in advance. If you prefer not to have your name or that of your organization on a submission, it is possible to have other NGOs submit on your behalf.

>> Case Study:
A hotel in Jamaica canceled the reservation of their venue when they learnt the meeting will bring together LGBTI people. The activists working on the case knew the government would not support them, so they turned to the UN. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders intervened with the government, who later convened a meeting with the hotel, the activists, and the UN. The compromise was that the hotel had to train someone to be sensitized, so there would be a person to be in charge when such a meeting would take place. Lesson: you can engage the UN even on smaller issues. Getting the UN involved can sometimes be particularly useful when your own government would otherwise not be supportive.

To read the Special Rapporteur’s letter, see OHCHR’s website: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A.HRC.16.44/Add.1_EFSonly.pdf

>> What should your submission to Special Procedures include?
Submissions should include information about the violations, the victim(s) and perpetrators, the legal background, actions taken, and the submitting organization.

To contact UN Special Procedures: urgent-action@ohchr.org
www.ohchr.org/SP/HRBodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx

To contact ACHPR Special Mechanisms:
http://www.achpr.org/mechanisms/ – Click on “Contact Commissioner”

Resource: ARC Guide on SPs

II. The UPR (UN) and State reporting (Africa)
These are mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR). The human rights records of all member States is reviewed on an ongoing, regular basis.
The UPR ensures that the human rights records of all UN member States will be regularly reviewed on a 4-year cycle. This means that 48 States will be reviewed per year, 16 at each of three sessions annually. The ACHPR requires country-reporting every two years, although some States do not follow this schedule and get behind on reporting. This is not the case within the UN system.

The UPR is intended to be a cooperative mechanism, designed to assist States in fulfilling their international commitments and improving their human rights situation.

In the UPR three reports are submitted:
- the State’s National Report
- a compilation of UN Information
- a compilation of NGO information.

NGO reports:
- up to 5 pages
- concrete recommendations to improve human rights situation
- online submission system at https://uprdoc.ohchr.org.

You must register an account and then use the online submission system at http://uprdoc.ohchr.org. You are also encouraged to send a copy to international organizations (e.g. ARC at arc@arc-international.net) so they know what information has been submitted and can make use of it in follow-up advocacy.

The presentation outlined specific examples of UPR recommendations for MENA States, including to decriminalise same-sex relations in Tunisia and Algeria (see the full presentation on ARC’s website for further details).

The language of UPR recommendations heavily relies on civil society reports, so it is crucial that civil society submits information. Activists should always know what exactly they are asking the UN to recommend/do.

The wording of UN recommendations is often very diplomatic, e.g. inviting a State to do something. Urging or calling upon are considered strongly worded recommendations.

Resource: ARC Guideline on UPR

III. The Treaty bodies
Treaty bodies are made up of independent experts whose task is to monitor whether the State is violating human rights. They can only review States that have
ratified the given treaty. During each review the Treaty body publishes a report and makes recommendations, also called concluding observations to the State.

You will find Treaty body reports a useful tool for your work, if you need detailed recommendations about an issue. The resulting recommendations can focus on the particular language in a law for example. These recommendations are binding, which means that your government has to implement them.

Many MENA region countries have ratified most treaties, so you can take them through this process. They might not implement their obligations though.

You are encouraged to rework your UN submissions, for instance by turning your UPR report into a shadow report for Treaty bodies. You will need to ensure that it is tailored to the specific Treaty body and discusses rights violations that fall under its mandate.

International Dialogue: Opening Plenary

The opening plenary of the Dialogue took place once all regional and international participants had arrived, following various parallel strategy discussions, consultations, and the one-day training event.

Representatives of ARC International and MantiQitna welcomed the participants. They acknowledged the funders of the event, outlined the goals and objectives of the Dialogue, provided an overview of the agenda, and shared some logistical details.

ARC presented a brief history of the Dialogues and highlighted that their goals are to listen and support each other, and find common goals and ways in which SOGII activists want to work together. The Dialogues are also an opportunity to discuss critical political issues and hear each other out.

ARC then addressed the theme of the Dialogue and why it focused on the MENA region. Within the UN, the strongest opposition to LGBTI rights has come from the MENA region. On the other hand, the region is widely represented in various UN mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, Treaty bodies, and Special Procedures. Our shared goal is to empower MENA region activists who can work on changing the States’ positions and engage with the UN. It’s also possible that when engagement at the national level becomes closed off, international engagement can open some doors.
Organizers of MantiQitna from Algeria, Bahrain, and Palestine welcomed the participants and thanked the volunteers who are members of the local LGBTQI community in Istanbul, a number of whom are refugees.

Message by Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The High Commissioner sent his greetings and words of support to the participants of the Dialogue, which was presented by Michael van Gelderen. The statement was posted on OHCHR’s website.

Dear friends,

I would like to express my admiration for the vital work that you do to defend the human rights of lesbian, gay, bi, trans, intersex and gender non-conforming people across the Middle East and North Africa.

I commend your bravery. Those who work on issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics are often the target of harassment, persecution and violence – by both State officials and private groups and individuals, including violent extremists. You and your organizations are frequently isolated voices reporting gross violations of human rights that are too often ignored not only by the authorities but by mainstream human rights organizations too. The toll of threats and attacks is a heavy personal and institutional burden.

But thanks to your work, awareness is growing of the violence and discrimination directed at LGBT and intersex people in this region and around the world. You have helped to expose a pattern of serious and widespread human rights abuses, including specific kinds of violations experienced by lesbian and bisexual women, by trans persons, by gay and bisexual men and by intersex persons.
International, regional and national human rights mechanisms have drawn attention to the lack of investigation of these and related abuses, and to the lack of prosecution of alleged perpetrators. Violence and discrimination against LGBT and intersex people are often perpetrated with total impunity, and when victims seek protection and justice the result is all too often further victimization.

Together with my Office and an increasing number of UN agencies, the UN Secretary-General has been an outspoken champion of equal rights for members of the LGBT and intersex community. Last September, twelve UN agencies came together to commit to a common vision of ending violence and discrimination against LGBT and intersex people. We outlined a series of steps States should take towards this end, and offered our support. In our joint statement we affirmed that human rights are universal and that cultural, religious and moral practices and beliefs and social attitudes cannot be invoked to justify human rights violations against any group, including LGBT and intersex people.

I am all too aware of how steep a hill lies ahead of us. There is an enormous gap between the promise of universal human rights and the lived reality of LGBT and intersex people in the Middle East and North Africa, and in other regions. But however great the challenges, we should draw strength from the important human rights victories won thanks to the advocacy that you have carried out over many decades.

I wish you a successful meeting, and look forward to hearing about the conclusions of your deliberations.

Keynote Addresses: Cultural, Legal, and Political Landscape of Gender and Sexuality in the MENA region

Chair: Yahia Zaidi

Gulf States (Kuwait – Foz Al-Ajmi)

Foz, a trans activist based in Kuwait, gave an overview of the legal situation affecting LGBTI people in his country.

Kuwait is a democratic country, but Sharia is one of the sources of law. Laws are adopted and MPs are chosen in its Council. The population represents many religions and political ideas.
Being trans is generally associated with homosexuality. In 2008, cross-dressing in public became illegal. Article 198. prohibits “imitating the appearance of a member of the opposite sex” with fines and/or imprisonment. Trans people are much more likely to be harassed by the authorities – as a trans man, you can be arrested for having short hair and dressing in a masculine way. This law has served as the basis of raids and ad hoc arrests. Foz has also been arrested and imprisoned twice. Once he was detained for two weeks and no one knew about his whereabouts. In prison, LGBTI people are routinely beaten, abused, and cursed.

To challenge the constitutionality of the law, you need three lawyers representing you and money – this currently seems like an impossible goal.

The government does not allow transgender people to obtain new legal documents. Just like in other Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, trans men and lesbians are often forcibly married off. Intersex people have also been subjected to arrests, detention and forced to transition.

Recently, Amnesty International took up LGBTI issues in Kuwait and was joined by some local activists. These efforts however were quickly countered by other campaigns, targeting LGBTI people.

There are a number of human rights organizations in Kuwait, but they are often linked to the government and activists do not trust them.

Maghreb (Morocco – N.A.)

N.A. is an individual activist based in Morocco.

N.A. reminded the participants that 20 February is the anniversary of the beginning of the 2011 uprisings in Morocco, that were part of the Arab Spring that spread across the region, including Tunisia, Egypt, and Algeria.

N.A. then gave an overview of the common points in the history of countries in the North Africa region – Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara. All these countries were democracies before the colonization and islamization of Africa: freedoms were granted to people, often ahead of time compared to other regions in the world. The first gender affirming surgeries took place in Casablanca, Morocco in the 1950s. A lot of artists came to Morocco and wrote about queerness. In comparison, as LGBTI people, we have no rights in Morocco today.

In the 7th century, countries in the region were occupied by Muslims, which marked the beginning of islamization. In the 1800s they were colonized by European states and laws were quickly changed. In 1913 laws that criminalized
homosexuality were introduced in Morocco and Tunisia, with a punishment of up to 3 years in prison. Following independence, the countries adopted their own penal codes. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria started using Sharia law. In Libya, Article 407 punishes same-sex relations and Article 408 public indecency, with up to 5 years of prison.

The situation is difficult today, because people can be punished for being LGBTI – you can be arrested for walking the wrong way, or wearing the wrong accessories (earrings, hats, etc.), even if you are a minor. There are hundreds of LGBTI people currently in prison. They are often placed in solitary confinement, denied food, physically and sexually abused by staff and peers alike. Activists on the other hand can be prosecuted for treason. Human rights defenders have disappeared, some have been deported; their phones and emails are routinely tapped; they are often followed; they often have to move from place to place to stay safe. Organizations cannot be registered in most countries in the region and organizing or protesting against the government is a criminal offence. Organizations are run underground.

In 2015 a trans woman was brutally attacked by a mob of 30 people. The case went viral. The victim sued the attackers. During the court proceedings, more than 50 lawyers were defending her and the perpetrators were imprisoned for 4 months. She asked for a symbolic 1 Dirham for compensation. The case was significant because it brought together lawyers from all across the country, standing up for the victim.

**Levant (Lebanon – Mahdi)**

Mahdi is an activist based in Beirut.

Mahdi noted that prior to French colonization, Lebanon had no law on homosexuality. The current law that criminalizes homosexuality was copied by lawmakers on the basis of the British example. In the past year Helem has documented 20 arrests on the basis of this law.

The police make arrests on the basis of the law if they find you while you are engaging in same-sex relations or if you come forward and make a confession. The first option is more common; most arrests take place in raids. Police often use fake accounts on Grindr to lure people into arrests. They have also forced detainees to confess, e.g. by threatening to out them before their families. Most people, especially those who are less educated or poor, are not aware of their legal rights in such a situation.

Since 2011, the LGBTI situation has been fundamentally affected by the arrival of Syrian refugees. Consequently, most LGBTI groups have taken up refugee issues in
the past years. Recently the police started raiding houses to attack Syrians - stigmatizing them as terrorists. There are 6-7 arrests per day, on the basis of nationality.

Since 2011, Lebanon has had a vibrant trans community. The biggest problem that trans people face is that they do not have legal documents that match their gender identity. It often happens that they are arrested without a legitimate reason, because they simply pass through a checkpoint and their IDs do not match their appearance. Trans people who have money get by much better.

In general, Lebanon is quite conservative; it is much less of a safe haven in the Middle East that commonly thought. There are three neighborhoods in Beirut that are quite open.

Helem, Mahdi’s organization, does not work outside Lebanon, but they often receive cases from Jordan. In Jordan there is no anti-homosexuality law, but the police do the same luring strategy and threaten people that they will expose them before their families. In Palestine there is no law either, but Israeli police often lure people into working with the Israeli government.

Q&A session
During the Q&A session, a question was raised about how much trust activists have in the judicial systems in the region. In Egypt a few cases against LGBTI people have been dismissed by courts; in Tunisia the Minister of Justice made a public statement that the law criminalizing LGBTI people is unconstitutional (he later resigned); Lebanon recently had a positive ruling on legal gender recognition that set out that trans women do not have to prove they have a hormonal imbalance to proceed with a surgery.

Some of the panelists noted that there have indeed been some positive developments, but overall governments routinely persecute LGBTI people, even if there were no laws that criminalize them. LGBTI people may be harassed because they are sex workers, or randomly stopped by the police in the streets, their IDs checked and arrested.

In Lebanon, courts do not work on the basis of precedent and they are also very corrupt. This means that even if there was a positive court ruling, the next one may not be so progressive. A Syrian LGBTI refugee recently said “I would rather go back to Syria”, referring to the harshness of raids in Lebanon.

In Morocco, activists commonly think that the courts matter a lot. Morocco has been going through a process of democratization. There have been a few
politicians who have chosen to support LGBTI issues. There is still a long way to go, but taking steps through the court system is seen as a crucial part of the process.

Current and Emerging Activism in World Café Style

Refugee Issues in Turkey (Nader Turkmani)

The situation of asylum seekers in Turkey has been deteriorating, because 3.5 million people have arrived and the country was not prepared for this. Turkey does not accept refugees from outside Europe for resettlement – people must register with UNHCR and wait to be resettled in a third country. The waiting period for resettlement usually takes years. During this time asylum seekers are not allowed to work and do not receive any financial support from the state. The only benefit that asylum seekers are entitled to is healthcare. In very exceptional cases UNHCR may support a person with 200 TRY (70 USD) per month.

With the exception of Syrians, who can freely choose their place of residence, all asylum seekers are assigned small towns where they must stay during the waiting period. Once someone arrives in the town they were assigned and have rented a room/apartment, they must register at the police station. This will give them access to free healthcare.

Most LGBTI asylum seekers in Turkey come from Iran, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Iraq. Small towns are more likely to be conservative and therefore dangerous for them: people have reported being raped and physically assaulted. Because it is safer for LGBTI asylum seekers to live in Istanbul, a lot of them go there illegally and therefore lose access to healthcare. Should they be attacked or in trouble, they will not be able to seek help from police as their illegal status would be discovered.

The situation of Syrian asylum seekers is somewhat different. A recent law provides them temporary protection until the crisis is resolved. They have access to free healthcare and primary and secondary education and they are not assigned to a particular city. This is because Turkey currently hosts 2.5 million registered asylum seekers from Syria (of a total of 3.5 million).

In general, Syrians are not eligible to apply for resettlement at UNHCR. It is only in very exceptional cases that they could – being LGBTI would not be enough.
Gender Assignment Surgeries in Iran (Shadi Amin)

In Iran same-sex relations and crossdressing are punishable by the death penalty or 74 lashes. Any positive mentioning of homosexuality is punished. Verbal abuse and incitement by public officials and media outlets have also been on the rise. Transsexuality on the other hand is recognized as an illness that can be cured through surgery.

LGBT people who do not conform to culturally approved models of femininity and masculinity risk arrest, detention, and harassment by police or paramilitary groups. Their other option is to seek a gender identity disorder diagnosis and undergo hormone therapy and surgery – which many LGBT people do. The Iranian Lesbian and Trans Network (6Rang) has interviewed 100 people and documented dozens of cases where LGBT people were prescribed reparative treatment without having adequate information. In some cases, when people realize they were attracted to people of the same sex or are gender non-conforming, they often turned to a doctor. Instead of reassuring them that it is normal to be LGBTI, their doctors advised them to undergo surgery as the only possible 'treatment'. This is a direct violation of the right to healthcare with free and informed consent and may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The surgeries fall short of standards expected of competent medical professionals and they may cause chronic pain, kidney malfunction, loss of sexual sensation, incontinence, etc. 6Rang came across at least three people who had died after their surgeries – possibly because they had no family to take care of them post-surgery.

Iran is currently the leader in the number of gender reassignment surgeries, after Thailand. While those who undergo surgery in Iran are mostly locals, they are mostly foreigners in Thailand. At a recent lecture in Tehran a surgeon shared that she performs an average of 13-14 such surgeries per month. Doctors are not trained to do these surgeries and some reported having learned the procedure through the internet.

Sexual violence and harassment in Egypt (Dalia Alfarghal)

*The full presentation is available at http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/

Violence and harassment against women is a cultural problem in Egypt, 99% of women have been harassed verbally, physically or sexually. 50% of women reported more harassment after the January 2011 revolution and 44% thought the level of violence remained the same.

Cis women face a number of violations, including
Sexual harassment: at least 80% of these cases are unreported as women are obliged to take the perpetrator to the police themselves and are often treated very harshly by the authorities if they report an attack.

- Domestic violence
- Female genital mutilation (FGM): 27 million women are affected in the country.
- In May 2012 5 lesbian women were attacked in the street. NGOs find it difficult to document violations against lesbians - it is either explicitly not allowed, or too risky.

Sexual violence against trans women and gay men is also common. The following challenges are faced by victims:

- Article 9(c) of Law No. 10/1961 on Combating Prostitution, Incitement and its Encouragement criminalises the “habitual practice of debauchery”, which includes consensual sexual acts between men. This provision violates Article 38 of the draft Egyptian Constitution on equality before the law.
- There is a lack of lawyers who take up cases where gay men or trans women were violated
- Societal pressure and cultural barriers
- Mass media coverage
- There are laws punishing civil society organizations.

Egyptian society commonly thinks of LGBT people as indecent, but the general assumption is that they do not exist in Egypt.

Between October 2013 and December 2015 47 trans people and 125 gay men were arrested. 12 cases of hate crimes and 59 cases of criminalization were documented in this period. LGBT people are often lured into arrests through the social media or dating sites. Grindr recently issued a security alert to its Egyptian users.

NGOs have been doing documentation work since 2011 - their main source of information is newspaper articles. These documented cases are just a tip of the iceberg. There have been severe crackdowns on civil society work and NGOs, which makes this work even harder.

Criminal laws in Tunisia (Rzouga Selmi)

The first mentioning of homosexuality in the Tunisian legal system happened under French colonial rule in 1913. The Arabic version of Article 230 of the Penal Code sets out that “masculine or feminine homosexual activities” is punishable by 3 years in prison (the French version only mentions sodomy). The most common prison term is 6 to 18 months, but there have been several cases where the
maximum term was issued. The government denies that the law is implemented, but the LGBT organization Damj (Association for Justice and Equality) has documented numerous arrests since 2009. Police often do raids at people’s homes or arrest people in the streets. If someone is suspected of a crime and the police learn they are LGBTIQ, they will be forced to undergo physical exams, such as rectal examinations.

Damj has not documented cases where lesbians were arrested. There is no information about any procedure aiming at proving same-sex activities between women.

Article 226 and 226 bis of the Penal Code are often used to target trans people. The provision sets out that violations “against public decency, and being guilty of indecent exposure” are to be punished. The punishment is usually 6 months of jail time and a fine, which is much higher for multiple time offenders and can reach 1000 TND (500 EUR). Trans people are often arrested during routine ID checks, when the authorities find a mismatch between their legal gender and their gender expression.

It is currently not possible to go through gender affirmation surgery or change one’s legal gender. There has only been one documented case where a trans man was able to change his gender marker in his documents.

There is nothing specific about the queer persons in the legal system, but they often face the same threats as LGBT people.

Intersex children are routinely subjected to surgeries that are performed without their free and informed consent. There is no law that prevents doctors from doing these operations.

The arrests of LGBTIQ people under the existing legal framework are a clear violation of Tunisia’s Constitution and its obligations under international law:

- Art. 21 on equality before the law
- Art. 23 on human dignity, the sanctity of the body, and the prevention of moral or material torture
- Art. 24 on life privacy, inviolability of the home, and the confidentiality of communications and personal data
- Articles in the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
Gender identity recognition in Lebanon (Dayana Constantine)

Dayana is a trans woman based in Lebanon. Dayana started her presentation stating that gender identity is based on a person’s feelings and not their biological make-up. She then shared her own personal story.

Dayana was assigned male at birth and was raised as a young man, hearing family members tell her that she needed to be the man of the house. Around the age of 11 Dayana had increasingly negative feelings about herself, especially when she was going through puberty and her body was changing. She always saw her body differently from how her parents did – she accepted it, but did not see herself as a boy.

At 21 Dayana came out to her mother as a trans woman. She also underwent some surgical procedures. This decision meant that she lost some people around her – but she also gained a lot by stating who she was. Dayana finished her input by encouraging others to not be intimidated.

Pinkwashing and its impact on regional and global organizing (Haneen Maikey, Palestine)

Pinkwashing is:

- a public relation campaign that was launched in 2005 to divert international attention away from Israel’s occupation and war crimes by the cynical use of its relative good record on gay rights
- the attempt to justify Israel’s occupation of Palestine by portraying it as a progressive, democratic and the “only gay haven” in direct contrast with the “dangerous” Palestinian society
- a campaign led and funded by the Israeli government, in cooperation with LGBT Israeli groups, and Jewish and right wing organizations in North America and globally.

Pinkwashing is part of Israel’s broader PR campaign ‘Brand Israel’ (2005) aimed at fixing Israel’s image as a brutal occupying force and rebranding it as a “modern democracy in the Middle East”. Through this campaign the government has paid and promoted programs in arts, sciences, and other disciplines regarding innovative technology, green economy, cultural diversity. “Gay rights” was a new addition to this package.
Examples:
- LGBT Delegations to Israel
- Gay Tourism
- Sponsored Events featuring Gay life in Israel
- Spotlights in international festivals and conferences
- Israeli Gay Parties.

Pinkwashing myths:
- Israel is a “Gay Haven” and a great gay tourism destination (trans remains invisible)
- Palestinian queers need to be saved by the Israeli government
- Palestinian society is “more homophobic” than Israeli society
- Israel gives Palestinian queers asylum (while half of Palestinians are refugees)
- Palestinian Authority is persecuting queers.

Pride appears as part of a nationalist and militarist discourse. It does not include other rights, e.g. the access to healthcare of trans people.

In the Q&A session some participants raised concerns that they may have personal relationships with LGBTI people in Israel and did not see this as a problem. Haneen affirmed that pinkwashing is not about personal relations, it is about systemic oppression. This is what LGBTI activists need to be aware of and be critical about.

Another participant added that they have cooperated with Israeli organizations and bodies who have been fully supportive of LGBTI rights. They felt such support was important for activists who come from really oppressive environments. Haneen answered by pointing out that LGBT rights should be understood in a broader context and activists need to take into account that people under occupation have no home, no citizenship, and suffer rights violations on a daily basis. To express international solidarity, activists should be cautious and critical when they receive such support. They should be aware of pinkwashing, call it out and try to challenge it, including when it happens in their own organization.
Breakout groups: The role of culture/tradition and notions of family in cross-regional contexts

The breakout groups discussed five questions:
1. What are the roles of culture/tradition and notions of family in our work?
2. What challenges do they present?
3. What opportunities do they present?
4. What is the dominant societal discourse?
5. How, where, and by whom has it been advocated and challenged?

People worked in regional groups and answered some or all of these questions about their own local contexts.

»Africa (excluding North Africa)
- Culture and tradition define norms, e.g. being trans in Tanzania is considered witchcraft - anyone who falls outside the norm is stigmatized
- People who are disadvantaged as a result of culture and tradition, also gain less financial and social status
- Gender roles are fixed
- Family and community structures are closed
- In Islam and Christianity marriage is between a man and woman
- LGBT people are invisible
- Violations against LGBT people are underreported
- The concept of coming out does not fit some local contexts
- There is often little local LGBT organizing
- There is a lack of clarity about how Islam relates to LGBT
- Lack of positive media presentation
- Access to HIV treatment is difficult, especially for lesbians and trans people
- Society associates homosexuality with rape and pedophilia
- The term LGBT is seen as Western
- Opportunities include fighting prejudice by having visible LGBT people and personal stories out in the public and sharing of information through the internet

»Middle East
• Activists are often forced to leave their families or their countries if they want to pursue SOGI work; they may lose their job; they may be coerced to get married
• Activists have to give up on some privileges, e.g. photos taken so they can come back to their country at some point
• Resistance to oppression may be a source of enthusiasm and power for activists’ work
• Activists can share their work with others through the internet
• Leaving your family or country may mean that you are becoming independent and can discover new aspects in your personality.

»LAC
• LAC countries have varying degree of protection for LGBT people, ranging from the recognition of same-sex marriage to criminalization
• Even in countries where the legal framework is progressive, discrimination and violence is common
• The culture is very patriarchal, heteronormative, traditional, and often religious in most LAC countries - there is a lot of work to be done on challenging macho culture, not just oppressive laws
• Indigenous communities have particular difficulties with the recognition of LGBT families
• Gender roles and expectations about gender expression are often very fixed
• Sex education is often outdated and does not reflect the realities of LGBT individuals and families
• Governments often show support of LGBTI rights at the international level (Argentina, Colombia), but not on the ground
• In several countries governments and parties engage with activists to look progressive, but these dialogues are often not translated into developments on the ground
• LGBT movements need to join struggles against other forms of oppression.

»North Africa
• The majority of the population are Muslim, the government relies on Islam as a source for writing constitution or laws – in Tunisia for instance, an Imam is the sole legislator
• Religion has a key role in relating to LGBT people, but culture and tradition are bigger barriers – they affect society much more
• Cultural and social norms often use the language of prohibition
• Close family members may be accepting of LGBT people, but distant relatives and society at large may not
• A lot of men who have sex with men do not identify as gay, queer or bisexual
• Activist are under constant threat
● It is extremely difficult to set up any organization and legally work within an institutional framework.

> Europe

● Notions of the family, traditional values, and the vulnerability of the child are part of the rhetoric often used in Europe – it started in Eastern Europe, but quickly spread into Western Europe, eg. was common in the debates on marriage equality in France

● Growing number of asylum seekers coming to Europe leads to fear and insecurity in the broader population – racism, xenophobia, and intolerance are on the rise, picked up by far right politics

● In several countries there have been open calls for a referendum to recognize marriage as only between a man and a woman; in some cases even without LGBT activists pushing for marriage equality

● Marriage equality on the other hand is revitalizing the movement, take for instance Ireland.

The first day ended with a film screening and discussion of *A Gay Girl in Damascus: The Amina Profile*.

**Fishbowl Conversation: Addressing Intersex issues within LGBTI advocacy**

Participants: Morgan Carpenter, Mauro Cabral, Hiker Chiu

**Morgan Carpenter** (Australia) gave an introduction to the session by defining intersex: intersex people are born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical norms for female or male bodies. Because intersex people do not fit these norms, they are stigmatized, suffer discrimination and are subjected to forced medical interventions. Because they are stigmatised, intersex variations are diagnosed by doctors. There is no one single type of intersex body and not all intersex variations are apparent at birth (roughly 10% in one Egyptian hospital). Some can be diagnosed before birth, or at puberty (cca. 65%). People may also find out they are intersex in adulthood or when trying to have children (cca. 25%).

(Note: these statistics are from a single Egyptian hospital and may not be representative of anywhere else; the purpose in stating them was in part to make it clear that intersex traits may not be obvious at birth, and intersex human rights issues go beyond what happens at birth; for example, puberty is another period when medical interventions peak.)
Some common terms used by doctors for intersex variations are “error”, “mutation”, “genetic error”, showing the level of pathologization and stigmatization.

Intersex status is independent from sexual orientation: intersex people can be straight or LGBQ. It is also independent from gender identity. Some intersex people are trans or nonbinary; many are not.

**Hiker Chiu** (Taiwan) spoke about her/his personal story and involvement in intersex activism. Hiker was raised as a girl, but did not develop like her/his peers during puberty. While s/he was fine with this, it was difficult to navigate a gendered world. Hiker was subjected to a number of surgical procedures as a child without consent, which s/he only fully understood later, finding old medical records. As an adult, Hiker tried conforming as female and for a long time identified as a lesbian. S/he did not want to change her/his body, but kept receiving questions from people regarding how s/he do not fit the norm. S/he loves her/his own body but it seems society doesn’t like it. This lonely journey lasted for 42 years.

S/he discovered s/he is intersex watching the movie “XXY” – s/he learned that there were others like her/him. S/he started doing voluntary translation work with OII International in 2008. Making resources available in Chinese was important to reach out to other Chinese-speaking intersex people.

In 2010 s/he visited OII founder Curtis Hinkle and several intersex activists in the US. It was the first time Hiker met intersex people in her/his life. This journey empowered her/him and changed her/his life. Hiker learned that s/he had to share her/his life story to reach out. Hiker decided to came out publicly as an intersex person in the same year. Since then s/he has been working on raising awareness in Taiwan and spreading the message that there is nothing wrong with being intersex. S/he has also started an intersex campaign “Global Free Hugs with Intersex” in Taipei Pride Parade to help people learn about intersex issues. Later s/he also found a community of intersex people through the internet.

Taiwanese people are starting to be more aware of intersex issues and wanting to learn more. Hiker does a lot of story sharing work in her/his country. S/he found that changing laws is quite difficult, but changing minds can be even more challenging.

*About pronouns: Actually pronouns are not a problem for Hiker in her/his native language Chinese. Hiker said: “The pronunciation of she and he is alike in Chinese, there is only a difference only when people call someone Mr. or Miss. I had been called as either. I don't insist to identify with both, either or neither.
Maybe I am more than that. I am me, that's all. I decide not to be bothered by any pronoun given by others. I appreciate any possibility what people see in me. I take anything to make my life easier at the moment. For advocacy, I think to twist or to stimulate people's brain is a good idea. So I choose s/he and her/his for now for educational reason. I may change my mind one day, it's not fixed."

**Mauro Cabral** (Argentina) spoke about the relationship between intersex and LGBT activism as an interesting and complex connection. He noted that there is a lot of confusion around intersex and its connection to sexual orientation and trans status. Anyone can be intersex and be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender. Intersex is the body you have at the moment of birth, while being trans has to do with gender identity.

There have been good examples of cooperation between intersex and LGBT movements on a variety of issues. Mauro highlighted however that it is still quite rare to see LGBT movements doing much work on intersex issues. LGBT movements also often fail to talk about bodies, fatness, or race. It is crucial that LGBT groups understand what issues are relevant for intersex people, e.g. forced medical interventions during childhood. It is equally important that they do not assume that there is a natural connection between intersex and LGBT.

Some points are common, such as stigma, discrimination, or how social norms exclude these groups.

Mauro also shared that he is both intersex and trans, as he did not identify with the sex assigned to him at birth. Dating gay men, Mauro often hears comments such as, he cannot be a gay man himself. These comments have sometimes come from gay activists – even they would not consider a body different from theirs as a part of the community.

**Q&A session**

In the Q&A session Morgan highlighted that most LGBT movements have been led mostly by white, wealthy, cis, non-intersex gay men. If intersex is a part of LGBTI, LGBTI movements have to do work that is truly inclusive of intersex issues. The movements have to be relevant to all constituent populations.

Morgan later added that intersex movements have existed for at least 30 years. Their core demand is that intersex people want to be able to determine for themselves what is done to their own bodies. This is an issue that is also important for LGBT and women’s rights movements.
Another goal for intersex movements is to expand what it means to have a male or female body – end stigmatisation of physical diversity. While some intersex people (and non-intersex people) would like (or have available in their country) a third sex or gender category, most intersex people are female or male like anyone else, and it’s important to recognise that assigning people to a third sex or gender category without consent is just another form of coercion.

Mauro made a similar point about alliances by saying that a lot of intersex activism focuses on children’s rights; how the medical profession treats intersex children; the issue of selective abortions. It is important to build alliances with children’s rights groups and to have various groups raising these issues.

Responding to a question, Morgan further noted that a lot of intersex people are not fertile. Sometimes because of biological factors, but sometimes because of the surgeries that were performed on them in their childhood.

An activist from the Dominican Republic noted that LGBT communities often do not have access to the intersex community, because these communities may not identify with the LGBT movement. Mauro responded by saying that in this particular country, there is a group of people in a particular community with an intersex diagnosis and that people are trying to avoid medically unnecessary treatments without consent. They may not however identify with the term intersex or want to be part of LGBT communities.

An activist from Kuwait shared that in their country people must be either a man or a woman. There was recently a case of an intersex person, who tried to undergo a surgical procedure in the hospital and they were taken to the police station.

Mauro added that intersex people have only been medicalized since the 19th century. Prior to that they had been considered both gods and devils.
Panel Presentations: Overview of international human rights mechanisms and current status of SOGI advocacy, achievements and challenges

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Michael van Gelderen)

*The full presentation is available at [http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/](http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is a relatively new entity in the UN system. The new High Commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, was appointed in September 2014 and is from Jordan.

OHCHR has 65 regional and field presences in the world. It engages with a great variety of mechanisms on human rights issues. These include UN bodies, governments, civil society organizations, and NHRI.s.

OHCHR works on the rights of LGBTI persons in a number of ways, including through the promotion of human rights, advocacy, human rights monitoring, standard setting, and capacity building.

UN agencies (e.g. UNHCR, WHO, UN Women, UNAIDS, etc.) also engage on LGBTI issues. In 2015, 12 of them published a joint call to action on ending violence and discrimination against LGBTI adults, adolescents and children. Often however, there is a gap between the statement and how these entities and their country offices engage on SOGI and intersex issues. There is definitely willingness to close the gap between intention and the reality on the ground, but a lot of work needs to be done still.

Special Procedures are thematic experts within the UN system. Several of them are relevant for LGBTI issues, including thematic mandates on violence against women, torture, detention, health, human rights defenders, executions, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

| Current status, achievements | Challenges |
| OHCHR | • Strong position / voice of the High Commissioner on this topic  
• Addressing range of human rights violations against LGBT and intersex persons  
• Increasing voice on gender identity + expression / trans, and sex characteristics / intersex  
• Strong synergy with international + regional mechanisms  
• Mainstream into many areas of work of office  
• Reports, guidance documents, Free & Equal campaign, expert meeting  
• Intersex, factsheets, monitoring, advocacy, etc. | • Polarization around rights of LGBT persons  
• Limited resources / field presences. |
|---|---|---|
| UN system | • Significant developments since 2003, accelerate after 2011  
• 2015 joint statement – unified voice/vision for UN system  
• UN summary – more agencies doing substantive work  
• UN focal points – more collaboration between UN agencies | • Large variation between regions, countries  
• Limited resource for most agencies  
• Polarization around rights of LGBT persons. |
| Special Procedures | • Many SP mandates work on rights of LGBT + intersex persons  
• Inclusion SOGIESC/LGBTI in country visits, allegation letters, thematic reports. | • Polarization around rights of LGBT persons  
• Some States do not engage with SPs  
• Lack of dedicated mechanism means ad-hoc approach – sometimes no mandate takes up a SOGI case. |

Links and contacts:
• OHCHR website  
• UN Free & Equal campaign [https://www.unfe.org](https://www.unfe.org)  
• UN system – joint statement, summary
UN Human Rights Council/UPR (Kim Vance)

*The full presentation is available at [http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/](http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/)

> Human Rights Council

Timeline of resolutions at the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly

**Timeline of UN resolutions, joint statements, and reports:**

- **2002:** Resolution (A/RES/57/214) on Executions (EJ) calls on governments to investigate promptly and thoroughly all killings because of sexual orientation - adopted (180 in favour, 0 against, 49 abstentions) by the General Assembly, New York

- **2003:** Resolution on sexual orientation & human rights – introduced, deferred and then withdrawn (2004) at the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva (often referred to as the “Brazilian Resolution”).

- **2005:** Joint statement on sexual orientation and human rights - delivered by New Zealand on behalf of 32 States at the Commission on Human Rights, Geneva

- **2006:** Joint statement on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights - delivered by Norway on behalf of 54 States at the Human Rights Council, Geneva

- **2008:** Joint statement on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights - delivered by Argentina on behalf of 67 States at the UN General Assembly, New York

- **2011:** Joint statement on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights - delivered by Colombia on behalf of 85 States at the Human Rights Council, Geneva

- **2011:** Resolution (A/HRC/17/1.9/Rev.1) on human rights, sexual orientation & gender identity – adopted (23 in favour, 19 against, 3 abstentions) by the Human Rights Council, Geneva (often referred to as the “South African Resolution”). As a result of this resolution, a high level panel on sexual orientation and gender identity was held during 19th Session of the Human Rights Council.

- **2011:** Report of the High Commissioner to the Human Rights Council on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (A/HRC/19/41)

- **2012:** Resolution (A/RES/67/168) on Executions (EJ) calls on governments to investigate promptly and thoroughly all killings because of sexual orientation or gender identity - adopted without a vote by the General Assembly, New York

- **2014:** Resolution (A/HRC/27/32) on human rights, sexual orientation & gender identity – adopted (25 in favour, 14 against, 7 abstentions) by the Human Rights Council, Geneva (often referred to as the “LA4 Resolution”)


Over time, resolutions on sexual orientation and gender identity have been met with
● increasing support
● less opposition
● more abstentions

Abstentions have been useful for SOGII advocacy at the UN, as they are not a clear no to a resolution. Activists have encouraged some States to move from a ‘no’ vote to abstaining.

Since the 2014 resolution, LGBTI activists have been working with the LAC 5 countries as part of a follow-up. There may be a new resolution coming out this year.

> UPR
The UPR has been a very useful space to raise SOGI and intersex issues as it reviews all countries, regardless of what treaties they have ratified. The UPR is based on a peer review system, which means that it is States making recommendations to other States.

The UPR is a relatively easy mechanism for activists to engage with. To participate in the process and influence the recommendations, individual organizations can submit a 5 page report and simply upload it on the UN’s website.

Activists are encouraged to ‘recycle’ their previous reports that they may have submitted to Treaty bodies or Special Procedures. Civil society reports for the UPR are somewhat unique as they need to be submitted at the same time as the national report that is written by the government. Instead of relying on the State report as a basis, activists however can look at the status of implementation of their country’s previous UPR recommendations.

Treaty Bodies (Helen Nolan)
There are 9 treaties in the UN system and each of these has a body monitoring whether states comply with its articles.

● Convention against Torture (CAT – Committee against Torture)
● Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW – Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women)
● Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD – Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination)
● International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR – Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)
● Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC – Committee on the Rights of the Child)
ILGA’s work focuses on the 7 most relevant bodies.

➤ MENA region
Regarding the MENA region, Eritrea, Morocco, Iraq, and Sudan were reviewed by Treaty bodies (CESCR, the HRCee, the CRC, and the CAT) in the past year. The treaty bodies raised the following issues:

- SOGI
- Criminalisation (Morocco & Eritrea)
- Violence
- Non-discrimination (including on employment, health, education, etc.)
- Freedom of assembly
- LGBTI children/children of LGBTI families
- Calling for specific steps:
  - Data collection
  - Public awareness campaigns
  - Attempts to change stereotypes.

**Treaty Bodies in general**

In 2014 and 2015, 45% of the reviews included SOGII issues. In addition to the more general issues listed above, it is useful to take a more specific look at the trans and intersex specific recommendations, beyond the general inclusion of “non-discrimination of LGBTI persons”.

Intersex: Advocacy done by intersex activists has led to recommendations by CAT and CRC (mostly in Europe). The recommendations included the following:

- guarantee physical integrity and autonomy
- stop the surgeries
- counselling for families
- full, free and informed consent by children prior to medical intervention
- investigations and effective remedies.

Trans: Trans issues do not often receive separate attention in the recommendations. Some specific references include:

- legal gender recognition, including removing abusive preconditions (Hong Kong, Chile, Kyrgyzstan)
- particular targeting of trans persons within LGBTI populations (trans women in arbitrary detentions in Suriname)
- right to identity of children.
There are definitely some gaps, for instance in the area of the right to health, where a very restricted view prevails. There are a number of topics that the Committees are not very good / progressive at addressing, e.g. sex work.

In 2016, 10 MENA countries will be reviewed by Treaty bodies:
- Kuwait
- Morocco
- Lebanon
- Tunisia
- Yemen
- Israel
- Turkey
- Oman
- Saudi Arabia
- Qatar.

The CRC will also be receiving civil society submissions on children in street situations.

Yogyakarta Principles and 10th Anniversary (Tess McEvoy)

In 2006, a distinguished group of international human rights experts met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia to outline a set of international principles relating to sexual orientation and gender identity. The result was the Yogyakarta Principles: a universal guide to human rights which affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply.

The Principles have been used for advocacy purposes in a number of cases at the national and international levels. For instance, 4 UN Treaty bodies have relied on the Principles when extending the scope of the right to be free from discrimination in their treaties. Statements in the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and made by Special Procedures have also repeatedly cited them. Regional human rights mechanisms have also referred to them.

At the national level, States such as India and Colombia have introduced laws using the Principles.

In 2016 we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Principles. To build on this momentum, activists are currently participating in a process to complement the Principles with some additional content, primarily on trans and intersex issues as well as women’s rights. This is important as there have been several important developments in the understanding of international law with regards to these issues.
Three organizations, ISHR, ICJ and ARC are working together to coordinate the process of convening human rights experts and preparing a draft General Comment to the Principles.

Q&A session

In the Q&A session, an activist from Iran raised a concern that for grassroots organizations, it is very difficult to engage with the various UN mechanisms. In some cases the issues are not picked up at all, and reports get lost – activists were concerned that their reports were not taken seriously. International organizations are the ones that have power in UN advocacy processes. Language can also often be a barrier.

Helen Nolan noted that none of the UN mechanisms are perfect, but it is a great development that they can be used for SOGII advocacy. Whichever UN body activists use, they must start the process knowing what they can and cannot get out of their engagement. When it comes to international organizations, they are prepared to support grassroots activists with submissions or funding travel and accommodation in Geneva. It may not be possible to change the entire power dynamics though.

Kim Vance added that UN mechanisms are particularly useful in countries where national advocacy yields no results. The UN can be useful, but it should also be demystified: it is not only international organizations that can engage with it, anyone can. It is not international organizations that should own these processes. They know themselves that, at the end of the day it is the local organizations who will have to work on follow-up and implementation. It should serve the interest of the local activist community, not international NGOs, to engage with the UN and get a positive recommendation.

When it comes to engaging with the UPR, activists can work with the State so they mention SOGII issues in their report; submit a joint report with ally organizations; write their own. Activists who want to stay anonymous can feed information to international organizations, but not be named. This may work well for the submission phase, but will make it difficult to follow up on a recommendation later.

Michael van Gelderen confirmed that there have been instances when a report disappeared or when a five-page submission was condensed into one sentence. However, the UPR has also yielded many positive results for SOGII advocates. Work invested does not always mean result, but result usually means that a lot of work and planning has gone into the process. Another issue is follow-up and
implementation - there is no enforcement squad in the UN whose sole task is to make sure recommendations are properly implemented.

Some activists noted that SOGII advocacy is sometimes difficult due to the lack of a SOGII convention. Some panelists responded by referring to the Yogyakarta Principles, stating that previously there was no unified terminology or firm reference point to link SOGII issues to binding international law. The Principles filled this gap in 2006. However, some issues are not adequately covered in it and activists have pointed to problems with language and terminology. The current process on a General Comment may remedy these issues.

The panelists added that having a SOGII convention is currently out of reach. They also expressed concern that having a separate treaty may reaffirm the idea that LGBTI activists want special rights.

Another ongoing discussion within the UN is to have a Special Mandate Holder in charge of SOGII issues.

Helen added that as useful resources, ILGA is compiling a report on concluding observations in 2014 and 2015 that were relevant for SOGII issues. ILGA, ARC, and the International Bar Association are also working on a report mapping the impact of the UPR in its first two cycles.

Panel Presentations: Overview of regional human rights mechanisms and current status of SOGI advocacy, achievements and challenges

African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) (Monica Tabengwa)

The African regional human rights system was established slightly later than that of the UN. The African Union came into existence in the 1970s. The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights has been signed by 54 countries. The Charter came into effect in 1986 and it is to promote and protect human rights and basic freedoms in the African continent.
The implementation of the Charter is monitored by the African Commission. States are expected to report to the Commission every 4 years and NGOs can submit shadow reports. Activists can easily recycle their UPR reports and use it for advocacy at the ACHPR. The Commission provides NGOs with the opportunity to have observer status, which allows them to make statements that are later included in the Commission’s reports. The Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) applied in 2010. It was first denied, but eventually got the status in 2014.

In 2010 LGBT activists proposed a SOGI resolution at the Commission. It was not accepted, but they decided to keep pushing for this goal year by year. As part of this process, activists realized that as soon as they started a discussion about decriminalization, the conversation was shut down. They had to reconsider how to frame the issues, so States are more receptive. They started using the strategy of sharing facts and figures about violence based on actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. States could not deny these facts, and they showed more willingness to enter a dialogue.

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (Ronald Cespedes)

Ronald started the presentation by acknowledging MENA region activists for the work they are doing in particularly difficult contexts.

The Inter-American Commission was created by the Organization of American States (“OAS”) in 1959 with the aim to promote and protect human rights in the American hemisphere. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights was established in 1979.

The Inter-American system uses four official languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English. The Commission is currently headquartered in Washington DC, but some States have proposed moving it out of the US to a country that respects human rights more.

In 2011 the IAC decided to dedicate more attention to LGBTI issues and created a specialized Unit in its Secretariat. In 2014 the IAC established a Rapporteurship on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Persons. The Rapporteurship continues to take forward the work of the LGBTI Unit.

In 2015 IAC published its first thematic report on violence against LGBTI persons.

Links:


Council of Europe (CoE) (Joyce Hamilton)

*The full presentation is available at [http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/](http://arc-international.net/istanbul-presentations/)

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law in member states. The Council has 47 members (including Russia and Turkey for instance), covering 800 million people.

Three key trans, intersex and LGBTI organizations have been engaging with the Council on LGBTI issues: ILGA Europe, Transgender Europe (TGEU), Organisation Intersex International (OII) Europe. They have used the Council in three main ways:

● Standard setting through the European Convention of Human Rights and soft law statements issued by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
● Strategic litigation at the European Court of Human Rights and the European Committee of Social Rights
● Putting pressure on individual governments through written questions, resolutions, and reports of the Parliamentary Assembly and reports of the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe.

In 2010 the Committee of Ministers issued a key recommendation (CM/Rec(2010)5), which includes a set of detailed measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The recommendation was adopted with consensus. It called on member states to review their legislation, collect data, and put in place national action plans by 2013.

The implementation depends much on the willingness of each member state and the majority have not taken significant steps forward. The Council of Europe provided technical assistance to 6 states, including Albania and Montenegro. ILGA Europe has run a project in 16 states to monitor implementation and urge governments to take action.

The Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe has been key in putting SOGI and most recently intersex issues on the agenda. In 2011 it published the first ever comprehensive report mapping the social and legal situation of LGBT in the
47 members. In 2014 it issued a Comment on the right to safety of LGBTI children. The same year it published a Comment on the situation of intersex people, followed by a full report on the topic.

The Parliamentary Assembly is not heavily engaged with SOGI issues; it is quite hard to get them to act. In 2013 they adopted a resolution on “Children’s right to physical integrity” that included intersex children. In 2015 they issued a report on gender identity, which included strong recommendations on access to gender recognition, health care, insurance, training law enforcement, etc.

The European Court of Human Rights has had a number of cases relevant for SOGI issues. Dudgeon vs UK (1981) and Modinos vs Cyprus (1993) both contributed to decriminalization. In 2015 YY vs Turkey dealt with sterilisation and the right to privacy. There have been some cases on family issues, gender recognition, and insurance.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Jessica Stern)

ASEAN was established in 1967. It consists of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN was originally created to foster economic cooperation and stability, but human rights were somewhat embedded in its rhetoric from the beginning.

There is currently no regional human rights mechanism in Asia. However, in 2009 the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was established in part with the mandate to establish a human rights mechanism. LGBTI activists are present in this process, which is quite exceptional – they were not present when other regional mechanisms were being set up. However, the effectiveness of the Commission is often criticized and questioned by civil society, as it is not seen to be independent from States.

Most recently LGBTI activists launched a campaign entitled “We are ASEAN too”, as part of which they distributed resources at the ASEAN and country levels. At present, ASEAN is not the most productive platform for SOGI issues, but activists continue their engagement in hope for a positive change.
Regional caucuses: Identifying key domestic/regional/ international priorities (short-term, medium-term and long-term) and points of entry and engagement to address these

Participants worked in regional groups during this session and discussed the following key points:

- Current status of organizing
- Allies and opponents
- Local, regional, and international priorities.

These points were only in part covered by most groups.

»Middle East
In Lebanon the local priority is decriminalization, the regional priority is to strengthen work on documentation.
In Syria there is currently no ongoing work because of the crisis. The regional priority is to provide safety and psychological support.
In Jordan there are 2 organizations, 1 underground group, and an online magazine that also organizes social events. Allies include health organizations, those working on HIV/AIDS, and UNHCR. The local priority is to provide community support, do awareness-raising work, and document human rights violations.
In Kuwait the local priority is to run a hotline and provide daily support for trans people. There are no allies.
In Bahrain there are no organizations, but there are groups offering health and psychological support. The local priority is to provide connections to LGBT people who are arrested or face harassment and violence.
In Palestine there are 2 organizations, and allies include feminist groups. The local priority is documentation, community support, and work against pinkwashing.

»North Africa
In Morocco there are 3 organizations and some individual activists. The regional priority is to unite and work together more effectively, and be more connected to other activists in the African continent.
In Tunisia there are 5, in Algeria 2, and in Egypt 5 organizations.
Overall, activists are trying to identify members of their governments who could be supportive. In some cases, such as in Morocco, there have been some positive examples.

»LAC
In Peru allies include the Ombudsman’s Office, women’s and general human rights organizations, youth groups, some government members, and companies. The main opposition is the conservative government.
In Bolivia allies are mainstream human rights groups, the media, civil society, and some government members. Opponents are fundamentalist religious groups.
In Jamaica allies include some government representatives, hotels, media, music industry. The main opponent is the church.
In Mexico allies include government agencies working on foreign affairs, the Ombudsman’s Office, women’s rights groups. The main opponent is the government.
In Chile the main opponent is the church.
In Colombia the main opponents are fundamentalist groups.
In the Dominican Republic the main opponent is also the church.

In the LAC region a key moment for SOGI advocacy was the Montevideo Consensus for Population and Development, which is a regional agreement adopted for Latin American and Caribbean governments. It marked the 20th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Cairo Programme of Action (PoA). The Montevideo Consensus includes key future recommendations for the region, including on SOGI issues (youth, gender recognition, intersectionality, marriage; data collection and awareness raising).
In 2017 the implementation of these recommendation will be assessed in El Salvador.

LAC activists use a variety of soft law instruments in their advocacy work. It would be useful if they had more binding laws to rely on in their litigation work.

Activists from the region also spoke about the cooperation between LGBTI groups and indigenous communities. In Mexico there is ongoing dialogue and as part of that, acknowledgment that the conceptions and the framework of understanding gender and sexuality are very different and should be discussed as such. There is some ongoing discussion with subgroups, including indigenous women and youth. A lot of this work is publicly done.

In Chile there are many activists who are indigenous and LGBTI.
In Peru, the existence of same-sex relations was basically deleted from history books during the time of colonization.
In 2013 the IACHR held a session on the situation of indigenous communities, where representatives of 4 countries spoke about sexual and gender diversity in the indigenous context. One issue that was raised was that sexuality and gender are understood in completely different terms than in mainstream SOGII work – phrases and concepts are different and people are forced to use terms that do not reflect their true identity.

»Africa (excluding North Africa)
In Africa the key priorities to move forward are continuing engagement with the African Commission and get accreditation for more LGBTI organizations; have a more effective regional caucus; have monthly video calls, raise funds and mobilize; work with interfaith organizations; and continue the work on the next Council resolution on SOGII issues.

»Asia
In Asia activists have been witnessing shrinking civil society space. Strategic litigation is one of the key priorities for the next years, particularly because cases in one country often have an impact on other jurisdictions.

Informal Dialogue: Resourcing and Funding MENA region advocacy

This session was open for MENA region activists and donors only.

Participating donors: Alexander Hammelburg (COC Netherlands), Adrian Coman (ARCUS Foundation) and Jack Harrison-Quintana (Grindr for Equality), Georges Azzi (Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality)

Grindr for Equality is not a traditional funding organization. It often provides technical support, e.g. advertizing an organization’s work or sending out messages to its subscribers. They will have a more traditional call soon – the grant will provide 100.000USD flexible funding for a group that wants to apply risky or innovative strategies for LGBT liberation.

COC works mostly on advocacy and capacity building. When it funds activities, it always carries out extensive needs assessment.

The Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE) is not a donor organization, but works with donors and local organizations. When started its operations, there was not much activism happening in the region. Activism is informed by research
and think tanks – most activists in the West are trained at university to do political action. AFE’s idea was to create learning experience for activists and create research institutions in the region. This was quite different from what donors had in mind, which was protests and organizing. Donors often want something that achieves a fast and visible result – sometimes it is very hard to convince them that this may not be the best idea. Each year AFE does capacity building work and supports regional learning. They are the only platform in the region, where activists can come together to learn from each other.

ARCUS Foundation is a traditional funding organization. It gives out 40 million USD per year, ⅓ goes to protect chimpanzees and ⅓ is for LGBTI groups. They focus on both US and regional/international groups (e.g. ARC or OutRight Action International). They fund work that is about religion or human rights. As part of its religion portfolio, ARCUS gives out funding to groups that tackle religious fundamentalism or who support LGBT people of faith or are leaders in faith-based organizations. ARCUS is particularly interested in policy changes and capacity development. Anyone can apply for funding through ARCUS – the application is quite simple.

An activist originally from Syria shared that LGBTI refugees cannot register an organization in Turkey – they would have to hire 10 Turkish citizens to be able to do so. Without being registered, they cannot apply for most of the funding that is available. In the end, they work on a voluntary basis, which is really difficult to do as a refugee, without sufficient financial support from the state.

A Moroccan activist shared a story of their activist group that was also not registered and therefore ineligible for funding. They overcame this by working with an intermediary organization that paid for some of their costs. However, when a crisis took place and a staff member of this organization was deported, they prepared a statement to reveal that it was the underground group doing most of the work. Activists were alerted in time, but they could have faced serious danger.

Some of the panelists responded by saying that confidentiality is crucial for them; that they can only fund organizations and not individuals; that they try to do in-depth consultation with key stakeholders when identifying their priorities or before funding any work.

A Syrian activist added that there is often no funding for things that people really need, such as food and shelter. An Egyptian activist shared that they need capacity building on security issues.
ARCUS acknowledged these concerns, but noted that securing more money is a joint burden. Organizations should try different ways to have funding.

A Tunisian activist raised concerns that urgent funds for emergency situations often come in too late to be really helpful. They also noted that in some countries it is very risky to receive funding from an international or American organization.

Another activist added that it is activists who know the real needs and issues on the ground – they should be speaking at a panel where funders come to learn and listen. A Moroccan activist joined by saying that as local activists, they want to pursue their own agenda and not try to tailor their work to the priorities of a Western funder.

An activist from Syria made the remark that some of the goals of Western funders are simply too unrealistic for the MENA region. He mentioned the example of requiring groups to work towards law and policy changes, which is impossible in many MENA countries. Another issue is that movements barely exist – it is crucial to support individuals who are in the process of creating groups and communities.

AFE panelists acknowledged that receiving US funds may be risky, but noted that no money is clean money and concerns could easily be raised about other sources too. Panelists agreed that it is not useful to receive funding that could put you in further danger. A panelist shared that their aim is to learn from activists now and take this learning back to donors so their priorities can reflect the realities on the ground. COC added that there are a number of emergency funds that are available to activists, including through Frontline Defenders and others. These can be found on the internet.

There was recognition among funders that the contexts MENA activists work in can be extremely difficult and frustration is justified when there is not enough funding supporting their work. Funders however also face problems and limitations. It is key that both parties continue doing their share in improving the situation.

Fishbowl Conversation: Using an Intersectional Analysis in our Work

Participants: Rauda (Palestine), Mala (Morocco), Hüma (Turkey), Kenita (St. Lucia)
Arvind started the Fishbowl Conversation by asking the participants **why it is useful for LGBTQI activists to work with other movements.** Is it an imperative for activists from the global south to actively work with other social movements? Is there an ethical, political and pragmatic case to be made for intersectional work? Finally, if working with other social movements is an imperative in the global south, is this model of working something which the global south can make to the global north?

Rauda from **Palestine** shared that it can be difficult to identify allies if you are a minority within a minority, within a minority. She referred to the example of lesbian, bisexual, and trans women, who are Palestinian and live under occupation. Questions are many: how do you interact with non-Palestinian groups? Palestinian groups? Groups in Israel? What do you do with hierarchies and oppression?

Hüma shared that after Pride was banned in Istanbul, **Turkey** this year, the organizers expected a protest, but realized that they were alone and that it was their fault. They did not work together with other movements before and those groups and movements did not show up when their support was needed. However that is changing.

Mala from **Morocco** shared that when they started organizing, they knew their aim was to achieve equality for all: you cannot secure rights for one group, without securing them for others. For instance, LGBTQI and feminist issues are all a class issue – the system does not give people an opportunity to be equal. It is important to stand against class-based oppression when we talk about LGBTQI struggles.

This past year Moroccan activists worked a lot with other movements and had very good forms of cooperation with them, especially with feminist and student movements. Some movements are against them, which is a big barrier for their struggle. Other groups understand their issues, but do not support them publicly.

The strategy in Morocco has been to first form friendships with people in other movements – this way, you are not sent away. Activists were marching together in the streets, doing lectures in the street university that they set up, and supporting each other’s issues. These instances were where many people heard about gender and sexuality for the first time and these encounters changed their minds. The cooperation was built up step by step – it was only some time later that they told their allies that they were LGBTQI activists.
Kenita from **St. Lucia** recalled that their human rights group **United and Strong** was first formed on an HIV health platform, so they came from an LGBT and health intersectionality perspective. They had to ensure that we include all the members under the LGBT umbrella, not just men who have sex with men (MSM). This meant that they had to look at the individual level and learn what problems people were facing in health, employment, and other areas.

They often collaborated with women’s rights organizations, who later started receiving more scrutiny from the government and were given a hard time trying to access State funding. As a result, these groups often do not openly support LGBTI causes – they do so behind the scenes. Kenita’s organization often works on issues relevant for LGBTI people through their allies – they may the critical issues at events that United and Strong would not be invited to.

Kenita added that it is important to identify issues that other groups might be interested in as well, be clear about our own goals when working with other movements and find compromises between what we and the others want to achieve. In any cooperation, it will be key that we learn about other groups’ issues and that we sensitize them to our own.

An activist originally from Syria raised the concern that in some countries it is virtually impossible to be part of other movements, because being LGBT is a crime. It may put you in danger if you reach out to other movements.

The speakers agreed that it is important to have a variety of strategies and try to work on different levels, including local, regional, and international. It may vary what kinds of allies you can cooperate with on these levels and how you engage with them.

Arvind’s second question to the panelists was about **how they organize in the face of religious extremism?**

Hüma shared that in **Turkey**, Islam has not been the biggest problem for LGBTI work. It is starting to get more difficult now, but 20 years ago when the movements were starting, it was not a factor. Today, there are radical islamist groups against LGBTI groups – for instance, they called for killing LGBTI activists following the ban on Pride. In the face of these threats, the movements are strong and have tools to fight back. Groups stick together. Another strategy they use is to not use a name that reveals they are an LGBTI group.

Mala noted that Islam is different in different countries. In **Morocco** there is a minority who are radical among Muslims – their opposition can make the work difficult. The other issue is how to support LGBTI Muslims to raise their voice. It
sends a very strong message when LGBTI Muslims come out: there is no way that God created them and then condemned them for what he created them to be.

In **St. Lucia**, activists sometimes need to phrase their rights not as rights of LGBTI people, but rather as rights of people, particularly LGBTI people. This can change the discourse. In 2012 United and Strong decided to open up a discussion about SOGI and spirituality and held a week long dialogue. They involved other NGOs, faith–based leaders from many religions, the general public, and media. The main message was that activists are not challenging theology, but want to show how you can be spiritual and LGBTI. A week later one of the participating pastors was on the radio and some people called in with hateful messages. He defended LGBTI people and said they did not do any harm to society and that it is important to fight stigma against them. The conversation has changed and it seems that it is now the sin that is condemned and not the sinner. This however means that ‘sinners’ still have to deal with the reactions to the sin.

Kenita pointed out that religion is not their worst enemy – it is violence and that LGBTI people are not protected from it. It is also sexism and racism intersecting with homophobia and transphobia; it is internalized stigma.

A participant from **Lebanon** added that there have been instances when trans people were not allowed to join other believers for prayer time.

Activists in **Jordan** recently hosted an event about homosexuality and Islam, which had a really positive turnout. 100 people attended, while it is usually 20. The activists received death threats, and had to hire security guards. The participant sharing the story added that religion is a mere reflection of society – it is people’s mindsets that need to be changed, not necessarily religion. Another activist noted that religion should be a common point between LGBTI people and others – a tool for bringing people together.

Arvind concluded the session by saying that the rationale for pursuing intersectional work is political, ethical/moral, and pragmatical. An intersectional approach must be incorporated into our work as we all move forward.
Observations and Recommendations arising out of mapping in World Café Style

Topics: cross-cutting issues across regions; potential civil society collaborations and strategies between South and South, North and South, within the MENA region; other types of collaboration and strategies.

»What were the potential sub-regional or South-South collaborations or strategies that emerged?

- Pan-Asia
- Pan-Africa ILGA
- Partnership trainings
- Dialogue
- Organizational alliances
- Conference Events
- Exchange programmes
- Research
- Share legal sentences and advance (share good practices)
- Share information from organizations to organization (bulletins)
- Addressing together colonialism and class issues
- Collaboration between regional human rights systems.

»What emerged as potential MENA Region collaborations or strategies?

- National LGBTQI Unions
- Maghreb LGBT Union
- Middle Eastern Union
- MENA region Union
- Regional Interfaith network
- Dialogues
- Research
- Collaboration with other faith regions
- Create MENA intersectional platform
- Creating a regional urgent fund by fundraising
- Regional effective network with at least 2 representatives per country
- MENA region common database
- Regional advocacy plan and platform
- Greater collaboration between North Africa and other Africans in the context of AU.
What were the potential sub-regional or North-South collaborations or strategies that emerged?

- Funding
- Stop imposing strategies
- Looking beyond North/South terminology and see each other as activists
- Training of funders by activists
- Include Iran in MENA region
- UN/UPR
- Capacity building
- Promoting the value of equal partnerships in decision making
- Campaigns
- Conferences/events
- Creating linkages.

What were the cross-cutting issues that emerged from the presentations and/or the regional caucuses?

- Sex work
- Pinkwashing
- Resource mobilization
- Religion/culture/tradition
- Racism
- Internal awareness of LGBTQI issues
- Disparities of power in communities
- Government and political accountability for human rights violations
- Limited separation between State and religion
- Need to overcome language differences in all regions
- Decolonizing our identities and bodies
- Decolonizing our legal systems (especially against same-sex practices)
- The need to use the intersectional approach
- Dealing with American Evangelicals (Catholicism is less of a threat)
- Problems of religious intolerance is a common issue
- Division among regional caucuses - needs to be unified in ideas and ways to improve.

Evaluation
At the end of the Dialogue, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. In total, we received responses from **46 participants**.

Regional breakdown: 12 participants from MENA, 6 from Africa, 6 from Latin America and the Caribbean, 3 from Europe, 1 from North America (18 did not specify)

Trans status: 10 respondents described themselves as trans (25 as not trans, and 11 did not answer this question)

Intersex variation: 1 respondent said they have an intersex variation (11 people did not answer the question)

Sexual orientation: 10 participants identified as queer, 8 as lesbian, 1 as lesbian/queer, 7 as gay, 1 as gay/queer, 1 as gay/bisexual/queer, 1 as pansexual and 5 as straight (12 did not answer)

Gender identity: 14 respondents identified as female, 13 as male, and 8 as other (genderfluid, bigender, non-binary, other) (11 people did not answer).

**Logistics and organization**

Participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 (1 = very poor 10 = excellent) how they evaluated some logistical aspects of the event. People were overwhelmingly satisfied with the conference site, the security, hotel staff and accommodation. Some concerns were voiced about airport transfer and vegetarian food options, as well as the patchy wifi connection in the conference room.

**Airport transfer**: Participants were generally satisfied with the airport transfer. One trans participant reported that they were harassed at the airport by security personnel who questioned their legal gender. [Average response: 8.7]

**Conference site**: The Dialogue took place at the Hotel Marmara Pera, where participants were also accommodated. Participants were uniformly impressed with the conference venue. [Average response: 9.5]

**Accommodation**: The hotel was in a central area in downtown Istanbul. Generally, people found the accommodation suitable. [Average response: 9.1]

**Food**: Breakfast and lunch was provided by the hotel and additional dinners were provided on some evenings by the organizers. People were generally
satisfied with the food, but a few participants noted that vegetarian options were not always satisfactory. [Average response: 8.5]

**Security**: Due to recent bombing attacks in Istanbul, the hotel was chosen with a view of maximizing security. People were very satisfied with the security at the venue. [Average response: 9.5]

**Hotel staff**: Overall, participants were very happy with the hotel staff. [Average response: 9.4]

Participants were also asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 (1 = very poor 10 = excellent) how they evaluated some organizational aspects of the event. People were most satisfied with the social and cultural events, the overall coordination and facilitation. Information and materials shared with the participants before the event scored somewhat lower.

**Background documents**: Generally people found the background documents satisfactory. [Average response: 8.1]

**Pre-conference mailings**: Pre-conference mailings scored lowest, but people were still overall satisfied with them. [Average response: 7.5]

**Facilitation**: Participants were rather happy with the facilitation during the event, which was shared between organizers and selected participants. [Average response: 9]

**Interpretation**: Overall people found the interpretation good, with one person noting that the device failed to work at times. [Average response: 8.6]

**Social and cultural events**: People were overwhelmingly satisfied with the social and cultural events and many felt that it gave them a good opportunity to better connect with other participants. One person raised a concern that these events were too costly and some reproduced stereotypes. [Average response: 9.3]

**Overall coordination**: It was noted throughout the evaluation forms that the overall coordination was very good during the event. A number of people noted however that it was difficult to follow changes in the schedule. [Average response: 9.1]
**Expectations**

Participants were asked to share what three expectations they had for this Dialogue. The responses can be summarized in the following categories:

- **Networking** (32 people), including putting a face to names and email addresses; getting to know each other better; making connections within the MENA region and across regions, including South-South and North-South;
- **Sharing experiences and learning about others’ strategies** (18 people)
- **Learning about the key issues in the MENA region and worldwide** and understand interregional dynamics (14 people)
- **Making connections for future cooperation** (14 people)
- **Gaining new skills and knowledge** about
  - UN advocacy (1)
  - Documentation (3)
- **Learning about funding opportunities and building relationships with funders** (4 people)
- **Other expectations** included have discussions about key political issues; raising faith-based LGBTQI topics; expressing solidarity

On average people felt that the Dialogue met their expectations (8.1). Some further question asked them about their expectations about networking and sharing and discussing strategies.

**Strengthening networks and support**

Participants were asked to rate on a scale of 1–10 (1 = not successful at all 10 = very successful) how **successful** this Dialogue was in helping them **strengthen their networks and support**.

The average response was **8.2 out of 10**. Across the various regions the score was generally high, but lowest among MENA participants (7.5), followed by LAC (8.7), Africa (8.8), Europe and North America (9 each). Among trans respondents the score was slightly above average (8.3). With regards to sexual orientation, lesbian and queer respondents were the two groups scoring below average (7.4 and 7.8).

Several people noted that the event gave them a great opportunity to make connections with activists in the MENA region and worldwide:
“Learning about the activists’ experiences and expertise from the region was very interesting and inspiring” (participant from the MENA region)

“It opened a more direct way to North African-African collaboration, a possibility for [our country] and promises of collaborations” (Lesbian participant)

“[I was] networking for a future MENA queer muslim activist gathering” (participant from the MENA region)

“We got information crucial to our work this year, as well as funding interest and possible commitments to growing our regional network” (trans participant)

“It allowed me to network with key agents within my movement” (participant from the LAC region)

“I got a chance to connect with activists working in the region, where I did not have many contacts previously” (participant from the Europe region)

Some participants proposed that there could have been more opportunities for networking by:

- having a less tight agenda
- having more space for more intimate and in-depth networking activities and less space for speeches and presentations
- making it possible for every activist and organization to introduce themselves, for instance by everyone posting an introduction note on a shared wall.

**Sharing and discussing strategies to advance SOGII human rights**

Using the same 1–10 scale above, participants were asked how successful this Dialogue was in enabling them to **share and discuss strategies** to advance human rights based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics.

The average response was **7.8 out of 10**. Across the various regions the score was generally high, but scored lowest by the North American participant (7) and MENA participants (7.6), followed by Africa (7.8), Europe (8.3) and LAC (8.5). Among trans respondents the score was again above average (8.1). With regards to sexual orientation, the lowest scoring groups were pansexual (7), queer (7.2) and lesbian (7.6) – gay respondents scored far above average (8.7).
“I had a chance to discuss with other participants about strategies for mobilization of the community and getting more engaged with the international system” (trans participant)

“In my opinion, it has been a great experience to be able to share assessments as to how discrimination systems operate, because even if in the LAC region we have a different context, there is a common rationale behind these systems” (participant from the LAC region)

Participants particularly appreciated small group discussions that they felt were the most effective in sharing experiences and having in-depth discussions.

Some people noted that there was not enough time to have lengthy discussions about strategies and that the schedule was quite intense.

Some appreciated that particular issues within the broader LGBTQI umbrella were discussed in separate sessions (i.e. fishbowl session on intersex issues), but expressed a need that intersex, trans, and women’s issues should have been mainstreamed throughout the entire event.

“Successful in SOGI and attention to intersex was great at the standalone session, but missing as a thread in all other areas” (participant from the Africa region)

**Topics not adequately addressed**

One-third of the respondents (15 people) felt that there were some topics that could have been better addressed at the Dialogue. The following topics were highlighted:

- trans issues
- intersex issues
- misogyny and LBTQI women’s issues
- intersectionality
- refugee issues and migration
- colonialism and racism
- regional realities and case studies from individual countries
- campaigning
- litigation strategies.

A number of respondents highlighted human rights documentation, noting that they could have benefited from more sessions on this topic – in addition
to the one-day training on Friday. One person added that they would have needed a more detailed explanation about the steps of a report writing process.

Respondents were also asked how these topics could have been addressed better. The following were suggested:

● having more time for in-depth thematic discussions, more small group sessions and fewer presentations
● mainstreaming certain topics in all sessions, e.g. intersectionality or trans, intersex and women’s issues
● creating spaces for subgroups to exchange experiences and strategies
● setting up a mailing list or forum so people can continue discussions after the event.

**The usefulness and relevance of the Dialogue**

People were asked broader questions about ARC’s International Dialogues. They were asked to rate on the same scale how **useful** they thought these events were in general. The average score was **9 out of 10**. Participants from Africa (9.7), LAC (9.4), and Europe (9.3) found the Dialogues the most useful. The response of MENA participants scored average (9).

Participants were also asked how **relevant** the Dialogues were for their work. The average score was **8.8**. MENA region participants scored below average (8.6) as compared to all other regions. The same three regions as above felt that the Dialogues were most relevant for their work: Africa (9.7), Europe (9.3) and LAC (9).

Trans respondents found the Dialogues more useful (9.3) and relevant (9.3) than the average. With regards to sexual orientation, lesbian respondents marked the Dialogues to be least useful (8.4) and relevant (7.4) for their work.

Participants were also asked if they wanted to see the International Dialogues **continued in future years**. Every participant answered Yes to this question (one person did not answer).

Respondents could also specify what **focus** they would like future Dialogues to have. The following suggestions were shared:

- intersex issues
- trans issues
- feminism
- intersectionality, cross-movement strategies
- refugee issues
- litigation and advocacy strategies, including challenging current
North-South power disparities
● fundamentalism, culture, religion, tradition
● strategies relating to security and emergency situations
● self-sufficient activism
● planning joint projects and network building.

Some final comments spoke positively about the overall value of the Dialogue:

“I am happy to being a participant and I learned so many things which can help us to run our activities more logically” (the participant did not answer demographic questions)

“Fantastic conference” (participant from the Africa region)

“A big thank you and gratitude for the present and past ARC team” (queer participant)

“Thanks for the opportunity to learn and share” (lesbian participant)

“Tremendous opportunity and experience” (trans participant)
Annex I

International Dialogue Agenda

Thursday, February 18th

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  International Dialogue Registration opens
7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  Speakers and Facilitators Working Dinner (for all speakers and facilitators)

Friday, February 19th

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.  International Dialogue Registration (continued)

(Documentation Training for MENA region participants/trainers only)
(Interpretation: Arabic-English)

9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.  Opening (ARC International, MantiQitna and COC)
9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.  Sharing Practices on Monitoring and Documentation Roundtable Session (Moderator: Alexander Hammelburg)
10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m.  Monitoring and Documentation: What would you like to achieve?
Small group brainstorming on goals, methodologies, and communication strategies (Facilitators: Alexander Hammelburg/Nazeeha Saeed)
11:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  BREAK
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  Breaking down the goal, the methodology, and the strategy Exercise with Documentary: The Time Has Come (Facilitator: Kim Vance)
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.  Examining Root Causes and Consequences Using goals from group brainstorming to build “Solution Trees” in World Café Style (Facilitators: Kim Vance/Yahia)
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<td>1:30 - 2:30 p.m.</td>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
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| 2:30 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. | Turning documentation into legal arguments  
                   | *Case Study in India (Presentation: Arvind Nairain)*               |
| 3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. | Introduction to Regional and UN Human Rights Mechanisms  
                   | *Team Competition Exercise (Host: Kim Vance, Score Keeper: Alexander Hammelburg, Judge: Yahia Zaidi)* |
| 4:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. | **BREAK**                                                           |
| 4:30 p.m. - 5:15 p.m. | From documentation to reporting for regional and international human rights bodies  
                   | *Powerpoint presentation (Kim Vance and Alexander Hammelburg)* |
| 5:15 p.m. - 5:45 p.m. | Bringing it all together  
                   | *Small group analysis of actual sample reports*  
                   | *(Facilitators: Kim Vance and Alexander Hammelburg)* |
| 5:45 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. | Report back and Final Observations *(all facilitators)*        |
| 6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. | **International Dialogue Registration (continued)**              |
| 7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. | Drinks/Welcome/Launch (open to ALL) *(Hotel Bar)*  
                   | *(This will be a “launching” platform for research/documentation from the MENA region for an international audience. Alternatively, a participant will summarize their impressions of the training day for the broader dialogue group.)* |

**Saturday, February 20th**

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<td>8:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.</td>
<td><strong>International Dialogue Registration (continued)</strong></td>
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|                  | *(Beginning of International Dialogue for all participants)*   
                   | *(Interpretation: Arabic-English-Spanish)*                        |
| 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. | Opening *(ARC International and MantiQitna)*  
                   | *Message from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations*  
                   | *Organizer Introductions, Acknowledgements, Logistics and Overview of the Agenda* |
Participant Introductions and Gift Exchange

10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  Keynote Addresses
Chair: Yahia Zaidi (Brussels/Algeria)
Cultural, Legal and Political Landscape of Gender and Sexuality in the MENA region
Nidal (Morocco), Mahdi (Lebanon), Fooz (Kuwait)

11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.  BREAK

11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.  Current and Emerging Activism in World Café Style
Facilitator: Nazeeha Saeed (Bahrain)
Topics: Gender Assignment Surgery (Shadi-Iran), Criminal Laws (Abderrazek - Tunisia), Gender Identity Recognition (Dayana - Lebanon), Sexual Violence/Harassment (Dalia-Egypt), Refugee issues (Nader-Syria/Turkey)
(5-7 minute presentations - 20 minutes at each table)

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.  LUNCH

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.  Keynote Address
Chair: Kim Vance (Canada)
Pinkwashing and it’s impact on regional and global organizing
Haneen (Palestine)

3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m.  Breakout groups: The role of culture/tradition and notions of family in cross-regional contexts
Facilitator: Arvind Narrain (India)
Groups discuss five questions:
1. What are the roles of culture/tradition and notions of family on our work?
2. What challenges does they present?
3. What opportunities does they present?
4. What is the dominant societal discourse?
5. How, where, and by whom has it been advocated and challenged?

4:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  BREAK

4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.  Report Back from Groups and Plenary discussion
Synergies and Differences

5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.  Film screening, snacks and discussion: A Gay Girl in Damascus: The Amina Profile (French/English)(2015)
When well-known Syrian blogger Amina Arraf—purportedly kidnapped by local authorities during the Arab Spring—was revealed to be an elaborate hoax persona, an entire international community realized it had been catfished. But the betrayal cut deepest for Canadian activist Sandra Bagaria, who had been involved in an online relationship with Amina. Playing out like a detective story, A GAY GIRL IN DAMASCUS reconstructs this astounding tale of global deceit from Sandra’s perspective. As she crosses the globe in search of answers, questioning journalists, activists, and intelligence agencies, she prepares for a face-to-face confrontation with Amina’s true creator. (Trailer available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoqQFRDqieU)

7:30 p.m. - Free evening. Enjoy Istanbul’s restaurants and nightlife.

Sunday, February 21st

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. Fishbowl Conversation
Moderator: Arvind Narrain (India)
Using an Intersectional Analysis in our Work
Tagreed (Sudan), Mala (Morocco), Hüma (Turkey), Kenita (St. Lucia)

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Regional Caucuses
Facilitators: Kim Vance (Canada) and Nazeeha Saeed (Bahrain)
Mapping the domestic, regional and international advocacy landscape: identifying key civil society stakeholders (including areas of focus), other allies, opposition and mapping out the linkages between all of them

11:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Report Back

11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. BREAK (Group Photo)

11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Panel Presentations (Chair: Marvellous Moffat)
Overview of international and regional human rights mechanisms and current status of SOGI advocacy, achievements and challenges

Regional:
African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) (Monica Tabengwa)
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) (Ronald Cespedes)
Council of Europe (CoE) (Joyce Hamilton)
ASEAN (Jessica Stern)

International:
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Michael van Gelderen)
UN Human Rights Council/UPR (Kim Vance)
Treaty Bodies (Helen Nolan)
Yogyakarta Principles and 10th Anniversary (Tess McEvoy)

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. LUNCH

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Regional Caucuses
Identifying key domestic/regional/international priorities (short-term, medium-term and long-term) and points of entry and engagement to address these

3:30 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. Report Back

4:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. BREAK

4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Film Screening and Discussion: And Still We Rise (English)(2015)
A moving documentary on resistance to the Anti-Homosexual Act (AHA) in Uganda. The film follows Richard Lusimbo, the researcher & documentation manager for Sexual Minorities Uganda, as he documents the struggle against the AHA. The story weaves together a history of the AHA, with personal stories recounting the widespread repression following passage of the AHA - including the impact on the film-makers (activists themselves). A story of resilience, the documentary is also a moving example of participatory documentary making. (Trailer available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72zVKGl0BI)

5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Informal Dialogue
Resourcing and Funding MENA region advocacy (MENA region activists and donors only)
Chair: Azza Sultan (Egypt/Sudan)
Donors: Alexander Hammelburg (COC Netherlands), Adrian Coman (ARCUS Foundation) and Jack Harrison-Quintana (Grindr for Equality), Georges Azzi (Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality)

7:30 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. GALA Dinner and Party
ARABESQUE MACKA (dinner with unlimited beverages)
Programme: Drag and oriental shows, drum show and DJ with dancing Coach transfer to dinner, participants arrange their own transport back to hotel, based on when they want to return.
Monday, February 22nd

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.  Fishbowl Conversation with Intersex Activists
Moderator: Sheherezade Kara
Addressing Intersex issues within LGBTI advocacy
Morgan Carpenter, Mauro Cabral, Hiker Chui

10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Observations and Recommendations arising out of mapping in World Café Style
Facilitators: Kim Vance (Canada) and Yahia Zaidi (Brussels/Algeria)
Topics: Cross-Cutting Issues Across Regions, Potential South-South civil-society collaborations/strategies, Potential MENA Region civil-society collaboration/strategies, Potential North-South civil-society collaboration/strategies
Other types of collaboration/strategies?
(15 minutes at each table)

11:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m. BREAK

11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Closing Plenary
• Overview of identified needs, priorities and next steps; continued opportunities to further the dialogue
• Acknowledgements
• Evaluation and Group Hugs

1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m. LUNCH

2:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. HALF DAY ISTANBUL TOUR
Includes: Hippodrome, Blue Mosque (Sultanahmet), Bosphorus Boat Tour (Private), and spice market (if time permits)