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## **UN: Faith leaders urged to stamp out anti-LGBT+ rhetoric**

*UN calls on religious groups and leaders to dial down anti-LGBT+ rhetoric for fear of violence or discrimination*

By Hugo Greenhalgh

Openly News (14.05.2021) – <https://bit.ly/34kcSZm> – Religious leaders and institutions should stamp out rhetoric or practices that could incite discrimination or violence against LGBT+ people, the United Nations and international human rights experts said on Friday.

Their call came amid debate about the relationship between religious freedoms and LGBT+ rights as Britain's government moves to ban so-called conversion therapy, which aims to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

"Religious authorities have a responsibility to ensure that religion and tradition are not utilized to promote discrimination of persons based on their sexual orientation and gender identity," the United Nations said in a statement.

The declaration was signed by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, more than 100 U.N. experts and the Council of Europe's rights commissioner ahead of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on Monday.

"The right to freedom of religion or belief of all human beings during their life course, including that of LGBT persons, must be recognised," the U.N. independent expert on sexual orientation and gender identity Victor Madrigal-Borloz said.

He called on religious leaders to dial down anti-LGBT+ rhetoric as it could lead to violence and discrimination.

"Such incitement constitutes hate speech and is protected neither by freedom of expression nor by freedom of religion or belief," Madrigal-Borloz said in a statement.

The issue was spotlighted this week as some religious groups voiced concern that the British plan to ban conversion therapy could criminalise clerics seeking to help people change their sexuality or gender identity through prayer.

In March, Prime Minister Boris Johnson told the Evangelical Alliance, a conservative Christian lobby group representing 3,500 churches, he did “not want to see clergy and church members criminalised for normal non-coercive activity”.

### **Related stories:**

EXPLAINER-What is LGBT+ conversion therapy and why is it so controversial?

British PM pledges to exempt prayer from LGBT+ conversion therapy ban

U.N. expert calls for global ban on ‘cruel’ conversion therapy

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