



**United Nations Human Rights Council, 38th Session (18 June - 06 July 2018)
Interactive Dialogue with SR on SOGI
June 2018**

Speaker: Humanists UK¹ representative, Dr David Harvey

We welcome the report of the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly its recommendation that States Members ban so-called gay conversion therapy and other procedures designed to 'cure' homosexuality.²

Gay conversion therapy is cruel and inhumane. It more often than not leads to psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual damage in both the short and long term. And given that homosexuality is a form of love rather than a disease, disorder, or sin, it is also entirely unnecessary.

Despite this, as is noted in the report, 'only a few States Members of the United Nations actually ban' conversion therapy. This needs to change.

If it is to change, the prejudices that drive the use of conversion therapy must be challenged. Indeed, a recent report into gay conversion therapies in China noted that all the victims interviewed as part of the research would not have undergone conversion therapy were it not for family and social pressure.³

States must also challenge the religious dogma that promotes gay conversion therapy, as well as the religious leaders who practice these 'deliverances' or 'exorcisms'. In America a significant proportion of the 700,000 people who have been victims of gay conversion therapy received their therapy from 'religious or spiritual advisors'.⁴ Concerningly, of the nine US states and the UK where gay conversion therapy is now illegal in healthcare settings, none prevent religious or spiritual advisors from practicing it. Of all the privileges that religious groups are afforded around the world, special freedom to psychologically abuse vulnerable young men and women is perhaps the most perverse.

The Independent Expert notes a 'positive trend' towards the prohibition of gay conversion therapy, but we hope he would agree that the pace of change must be faster given the grave human cost of allowing it to continue. We call on all States Members to ban gay conversion therapy immediately, whether it takes place in clinics or churches, and to publicly denounce the homophobic ideology that sits behind it.

Thank you.

¹ Humanists UK recently changed its name from the British Humanist Association.

² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/132/12/PDF/G1813212.pdf?OpenElement>

³ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/11/15/have-you-considered-your-parents-happiness/conversion-therapy-against-lgbt-people>

⁴ <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Conversion-Therapy-LGBT-Youth-Jan-2018.pdf>