

**United Nations Human Rights Council, 62nd Session
15 June to 7 July 2026**

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue – Independent Expert on protection against violence
and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity**

Speaker: Humanists UK representative: Laura Newlyn¹

We would like to thank the Independent Expert for his thorough report. We particularly welcome his recognition that conversion practices against LBQ women form part of a wider pattern of gender-based violence, often driven by family, community, and cultural or religious pressure.²

We uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief – or FoRB – for all, but this right cannot be invoked to justify abuse. As former Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed stated, FoRB ‘does not limit the state’s obligation to protect the life, dignity, health and equality of LGBTQ+ persons’.³

When women are experiencing distress over their sexual orientation or gender identity, they should be met with person-centred and therapeutically well-grounded support. However, conversion practices have no credible evidence base. They are harmful even where they take forms that may not otherwise be criminalised. We would like to remind States that a former mandate holder has already reported that, ‘all practices attempting conversion are inherently humiliating, demeaning and discriminatory’, generating shame and guilt, and associated with significant pain and suffering including suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.⁴

Yet the Global Equality Caucus reports that only 15 countries have passed national legislation to ban conversion practices.⁵

How can the Independent Expert encourage states to adopt and implement comprehensive bans on conversion practices, and make clear that the rights, dignity, and safety of LBQ women are not secondary to claims of religious or cultural tradition?

¹ Humanists UK is the operating name of the British Humanist Association.

² UN Human Rights Council, *Violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, bisexual, and queer women - Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity A/HRC/62/46*, 29 April 2026, para 43, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/62/46>.

³ Humanists International, ‘UN expert calls for ban on anti-LGBTI conversion therapy in UK’, 19 April 2021 <https://humanists.international/2021/04/un-expert-calls-for-ban-on-anti-lgbti-conversion-therapy-in-uk>

⁴ UNHRC, *Practices of so-called “conversion therapy” Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity A/HRC/44/53*, 01 May 2020, paras 55–56, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/44/53>

⁵ Global Equality Caucus, IDAHOBIT 2025: Charting Global Progress on Banning Conversion Practices <https://equalitycaucus.org/news/article/idahobit-2025-charting-global-progress-on-banning-conversion-practices>