



Partnering with Rainbow Railroad:

Three recommendations for U.S. Policy-makers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
JUNE 1, 2021

Overview

In 2019, 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide due to “persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.”

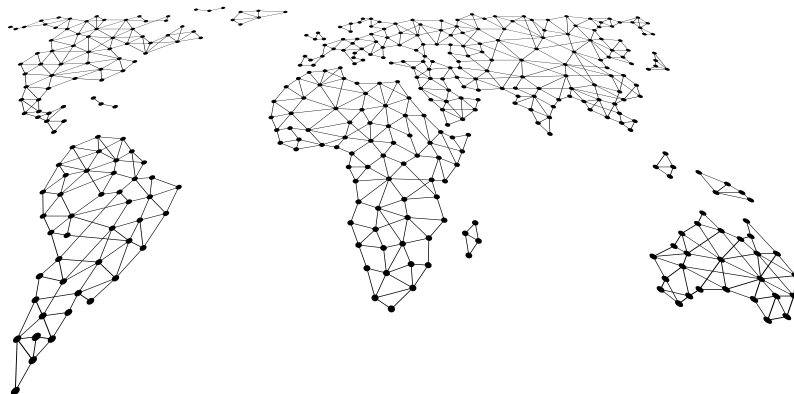
At the same time, some 71 countries around the world currently have laws that criminalize same-sex behaviour, and no fewer than 15 criminalize gender diversity. These laws, often legacies of colonization, are powerful tools of repression and extortion. As a consequence, LGBTQI+ people are routinely arrested and denied basic human rights; often, they are brutally attacked, tortured or even murdered.

The lockdowns and border closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated this situation. Of particular concern over the past year are instances of police abuse and brutality enacted under the guise of enforcing COVID-19 quarantine measures, as seen in a number of countries including Uganda, Egypt and Jamaica.

Over the course of its 15 year history, Rainbow Railroad has helped over 1,600 LGBTQI+ individuals find safe haven from state-enabled harassment and violence through emergency relocations and other forms of assistance. Our goal is to work with governments and policy-makers to create more pathways to safety for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers and abolish repressive laws that persecute LGBTQI+ individuals around the world.

Our Priority Recommendations

- 1. Increase refugee admissions to the U.S. for LGBTQI+ populations given their unique vulnerabilities**
- 2. Grant LGBTQI+ refugee organizations like Rainbow Railroad official recognized referral status**
- 3. Protect the right of asylum by ensuring that harmful and discriminatory detention policies are reversed and that detention is safe for LGBTQI+ migrants.**



Calls to Action

To that end, Rainbow Railroad calls on the Biden-Harris Administration and the U.S. Congress to address the current global refugee crisis—one that disproportionately affects LGBTQI+ people—comprehensively, using relevant laws, policies and legislation. Specifically, the U.S. government should:

- 1) Employ Priority 1 (P-1) and Priority 2 (P-2) mechanisms to prioritize LGBTQI+ persons through processing;
- 2) Expand the private-sponsorship model outlined in Section 1 of the Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration to create a model that focuses specifically on resettlement of LGBTQI+ refugees;
- 3) Increase the admission of LGBTQI+ refugees in the U.S., working in partnership with Rainbow Railroad and other refugee-advocacy organizations;
- 4) Grant LGBTQI+ organizations like Rainbow Railroad official recognized referral status (allowing us and other appropriate non-governmental organizations to support and refer LGBTQI+ cases for P-1 visas in situations where the individual cannot leave their country of origin), and provide training for assessing LGBTQI+ refugee claims, including assessing credibility; and
- 5) Invest in proven alternatives to detention and non-profit case management programs—alternatives President Biden committed to pursuing during his election campaign.



Conclusion

In February 2021, President Biden released the [Memorandum on Advancing the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Persons Around the World](#), directing American agencies operating abroad “to ensure that United States diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBTQI+ persons.” Given the unique persecution LGBTQI+ populations face globally, it is imperative that the Biden-Harris Administration commit to implementing our calls to increase LGBTQI+ resettlement in the U.S., grant Rainbow Railroad and other like-minded organizations official referral status in order to refer and immediately resettle LGBTQI+ refugees fleeing harm and invest in proven alternatives to detention and non-profit case management. It is through partnerships with organizations like Rainbow Railroad that the U.S. government can effectively intervene to prevent the persecution of, and create new pathways to safety for, LGBTQI+ people.

[Click here to read the full report!](#)



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