



*Dawson College Model United Nations Conference*

# UNCQR

The United Nations First Committee  
on Queer Rights

Background Guide

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## Land acknowledgment

We would like to begin by acknowledging that Dawson College is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtià:ke (Montréal) is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

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## Reconnaissance des territoires traditionnels

Nous aimerions commencer par reconnaître que le Collège Dawson est situé en territoire autochtone, lequel n'a jamais été cédé. Nous reconnaissons la nation Kanien'kehá: ka comme gardienne des terres et des eaux sur lesquelles nous nous réunissons aujourd'hui. Tiohtià:ke (Montréal) est historiquement connu comme un lieu de rassemblement pour de nombreuses Premières Nations, et aujourd'hui, une population autochtone diversifiée, ainsi que d'autres peuples, y résident. C'est dans le respect des liens avec le passé, le présent et l'avenir que nous reconnaissons les relations continues entre les Peuples Autochtones et autres personnes de la communauté montréalaise.

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Moving the pendulum  
forward:  
Queer rights between  
Progress and  
Backlash

# Letter from the Chair



Dear delegates,

My name is Olivier Lamoureux, I use They/Them pronouns, and I am a second-year student in Dawson's Law, Society, and Justice program. In my time at Dawson, I have always been a member of DCMUN, which allowed me to assist many conferences in Montréal universities, and even in Boston, with the Harvard National Model United Nations Conference (HNMUN). All this to say that MUN introduced me to university students from all around the world and made me research and debate topics I was completely unfamiliar with (all this in my second language, might I add). I can only hope that participating in this committee will inspire you as much as I was when I was first introduced to MUN.



The inspiration behind this committee also comes from my experiences in other MUN conferences. Specifically, I noticed that there were committees on many subjects related to social justice, like UNHCR, UNIFEM, etc., but never about queer issues. As a gay and non-binary person, I find this lack of representation profoundly disappointing and outrageous. It is broadly known that queer people all around the world face violence, exclusion, and precarity, but no MUN conference has ever decided to tackle this issue and discuss ways of protecting queer people at the UN level. In this context, creating this committee is a way for me to encourage people of all genders, sexualities, and cultures to learn and raise awareness about the oppression queer people face.

I am excited to see the contribution each delegate will bring to this committee. Even more than the dais, you will be pioneers of queer rights discussion in MUN, giving you great influence on how future MUN conferences will approach the issues lived by queer people. Such influence gives you a new and unique opportunity, but also a great responsibility to discuss queer issues with respect, knowledge, and compassion.

Thank you for participating in this committee; I am eager to see what great tree of debate will grow from the seeds of this guide.

"Au travers des périls un grand cœur se fait jour. Que ne peut l'amitié conduite par l'amour?"  
(Andromaque, Acte 3, scène 1)

Sincerely,  
Olivier Lamoureux



## INTRODUCTION

# Letter from the Vice-Chair



Dear delegates,

My name is Magalie McKay (she/her) and I am a third-year Dawson student in the Law, Society, and Justice program.

I was first introduced to the “MUN life” in secondary 5 when I was asked to participate in a debate regarding world issues. I was tasked with researching Germany’s contribution to the European Union and, to my surprise, I developed an interest in international relations. Thus, in my second year at Dawson, I joined the DCMUN team.

In addition to refining my debating skills and learning that the human psyche can endure a MUN party, run on four hours of sleep and *still* allow us to be proficient delegates, my time as a DCMUN student allowed me to find some of my closest friends. I sincerely hope that your participation in the United Nations First Committee on Queer Rights (UNCQR) will allow you to develop long-lasting friendships and inspire you to initiate change.

Whilst it is broadly known that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), an international document adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, supposedly recognizes the “inherent [...] equal[ity] of all members of the human family”, the deeply-ingrained bias against queer individuals threatens the egalitarian principles outlined by the UDHR. Due to the unique nature of the oppression of 2SLGBTQIA+ members, the creation of a committee entirely dedicated to the struggles of queer persons is mandatory. The purpose of the UNCQR is, chiefly, to enact laws and develop local initiatives that protect and empower members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In this committee, I encourage you to start constructive debates and to be innovative when proposing solutions. I cannot wait to meet you and, above all, I urge you to have fun.

“We’re here. We’re queer. Get used to it”  
- Queer Nation

Sincerely,

Magalie McKay





# Letter from the Under-Secretary-General of General Assemblies

Dear delegates,

Welcome to the Dawson College Model United Nations Conference 2025! It is my honour to extend this letter to you as you embark on this exciting journey through diplomacy, negotiation, and international collaboration.

As the Under-Secretary-General of the General Assembly, I am incredibly proud of the work each of you has already invested in preparation for this conference. Your dedication, research, and commitment to understanding complex global issues do not go unnoticed, and I am certain you will approach this experience with the enthusiasm and intellect needed to drive impactful discussions and solutions.

In particular, I would like to recognize the delegates of the DISEC committee and the UNCQR. Each of these committees represents critical challenges that the world faces today, and your contributions have the potential to inspire fresh approaches to ongoing issues. Through your work, you not only gain deeper insights into the dynamics of diplomacy but also add your voices to a legacy of young leaders shaping a better future.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to the chairs of each committee. Your leadership, dedication, and countless hours of preparation have created an environment where delegates can thrive. Your expertise and guidance are invaluable in creating thoughtful debate and ensuring that every delegate has an opportunity to contribute meaningfully. It is through your efforts that the vision of this conference comes to life, and I am truly proud of the work you have done to make DCMUN a success. Thank you for your unwavering commitment and exemplary service.

I urge each of you to remain open to diverse perspectives, to be respectful yet bold in expressing your ideas, and to stay resilient in the face of challenges that inevitably arise in diplomatic discourse. You are the future leaders and policymakers of tomorrow, and DCMUN is your platform to shine.

From an avid MUN delegate herself,  
Alexandra Williams (she/her)  
Under-Secretary-General of the General Assembly  
Dawson College Model United Nations (DCMUN)





# Letter of Equity

### **Equity Statement**

The Dawson College Model United Nations (DCMUN) Conference is steadfast in its commitment to fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all participants. Upholding the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion is a shared responsibility among delegates, the Dais, the Secretariat, and faculty members. Consequently, DCMUN maintains a zero-tolerance policy toward any actions or behavior that promote hatred, discrimination, disrespect, or conduct deemed inappropriate by the Dais or Secretariat. The commitment to these values aligns with the guiding principles of the United Nations, which emphasize that “the principles of equality and non-discrimination are part of the foundations of the rule of law.” Through this, DCMUN ensures that its conference remain inclusive and respectful spaces where meaningful dialogue and collaboration can thrive.

To uphold this standard, DCMUN reserves the right to impose disciplinary measures on individuals who engage in behaviors including, but not limited to:

- Any form of speech, written work, language, communication, action, behaviour, or resolution that demeans, excludes, or harms individuals or groups based on nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics. This includes microaggressions, stereotyping, and any behavior that creates a hostile environment.
- Any unwanted sexual advances, comments, gestures, or actions, as well as other forms of harassment that create an unsafe or uncomfortable environment for others.
- Any form of speech, language, communication, written work, action, behavior, or resolution that perpetuates prejudice, stereotypes, or discrimination based on race or ethnicity. This includes but is not limited to racial slurs, offensive jokes, cultural appropriation, and behavior that marginalizes or undermines individuals or groups based on their racial or ethnic identity.
- Any form of speech, language, communication, written work, action, behaviour, or resolution that invalidates the experiences of individuals or groups, or trivializes or makes light of sensitive topics such as racism, sexual harassment, violence, war, genocide, or other forms of oppression and discrimination.
- Any other behavior deemed inappropriate by the members of the DCMUN Secretariat.

Disciplinary measures may include, but are not limited to, verbal warnings, disqualification from award consideration, or removal from the conference entirely. While this list is not exhaustive, it serves as a framework to ensure all participants uphold the highest standards of equity and respect. These guidelines reflect our commitment to creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all delegates, staff, and attendees throughout the duration of the conference.

Sincerely,  
Kenneth Clarence Oledan and Victoria Ormiston  
Directors of Equity



## INTRODUCTION

# The UN's role in relation to Queer rights



The United Nations (UN) is the center of many efforts to promote international respect of human rights. With such institutions as the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) or the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the UN is pivotal in the international sphere when it comes to human rights. However, there is no such institution for queer people. Additionally, there is no legally binding international treaty on queer rights. This committee proposes to end this gap in international human rights efforts by making queer people the center of the human rights agenda. Delegates will have the opportunity to engage in a debate that has never taken place in MUN conferences: What is the best way the UN could protect queer people internationally and promote their well-being?

When diving into the subject of queer rights as human rights, delegates should always take into consideration the intersection of different systems of oppression affecting queer people internationally. An intersectional analysis of this issue recognizes that queer people come from all kinds of communities, which means that if a queer person is a member of another marginalised group, then both systems of oppression will affect them in a unique blend of marginalisation. For example, if a gay person is also a woman, then homophobia and sexism will intersect and develop into lesbophobia. Similarly, if a trans woman is a refugee, then the precarity often associated with the refugee status like the lack of access to healthcare, insecurity, or unemployment, will be amplified by the trans identity of the woman in question. Intersectionality does not only encompass identities or legal status, but also culture, religion, economic class, ability, etc. In this sense, the development of queer rights as human rights should take into account the diversity and complexity of queer people all around the world.

Considering the lack of an international body or treaty focused on queer rights, the task of this committee is colossal. To narrow our focus on a more specific issue, this committee will center around the development of legal protections for local communities of queer people. More precisely, the protection of the cultural uniqueness of queer communities all around the world. The following sections of this guide explore the development of a rights discourse in UN institutions as it relates to queer people, the worldwide backlash it has caused, and inspirations showing possible paths forward for queer rights.

Because the mission of this committee is to find innovative methods of implementing queer rights internationally, which is extremely contentious for some countries, the delegations represented in this committee are all from countries with some level of legal protections for queer people. In this sense, this committee will only tolerate discourses of tolerance, non-discrimination, and respect. The debate proposed by this guide is not whether queer rights should be implemented, but how. In other words, the mission of this committee is to go beyond the status quo of the UN and meaningfully debate on best methods of implementation and affirmation of queer rights as human rights.



# General Background Information

## Who are Queer people?

Advocating for queer people demands for a deep understanding of the different identities, ways of life, and practices that they engage in throughout cultures, nations, and continents. Indeed, a prerequisite for advancing 2SLGBTQI+ rights around the world requires to know their realities, struggles, and worldviews.

To begin on this journey, it is important to appreciate that queer identities as understood in Canada and in the West vary greatly among other cultures. However, let us begin with the basics:

## The basics!

**2SLGBTQI+:** An acronym, mostly used in the Canadian context and constantly evolving [1], meaning Two-spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Agender, etc.

- **Two-spirit:** An umbrella term used in English that captures broad concepts of gender and sexual diversity that comprises both male and female spirits in Indigenous cultures in North America. It can also include a spiritual and traditional perspective.
- **Lesbian:** A term generally understood to mean a woman or non-male person being sexually/romantically attracted to another woman or non-male person.
- **Gay:** A term generally understood to mean a man or non-female person being sexually/romantically attracted to another man or non-female person, although in some contexts this term can be synonymous to queer.
- **Trans:** An umbrella term encompassing people whose gender identity (“Internal and deeply felt sense of being a man or woman, both or neither.”[2])
- **Queer:** An umbrella term now encompassing all identities that do not fall into the heterosexual and cisgender spectrum. It is synonymous with 2SLGBTQIA+.
- **Intersex:** An umbrella term that encompasses the “various types of biological sex characteristics” [3] that don’t fall neatly into the male/female binary.
- **+**: The plus symbolizes that the 2SLGBTQI+ acronym does not include all queer gender and sexual identities. For example, it does not include pansexual, non-binary, asexual, demigirl/boy, etc.



## SECTION 1

# General Background Information

## The basics!

It is critical to understand that gender identity and sexuality can manifest very differently from one person to the other. Moreover, the identities listed above (except for Two-spirit) are Western constructs that have been informed by centuries of specific religious and cultural understandings of sex and gender, which are very different from other cultures.

Indeed, Indigenous cultures around the world include “their own long-established traditions for third, fourth, fifth, or more genders.”<sup>[4]</sup> These identities, which can denote deviation from both gender and sexual binaries, are unique between cultures and were often revered as “religious specialists, healers, or spiritual workers”<sup>[5]</sup> pre European colonization. Speaking of, European colonization played a monumental role in the contemporary perception of gender and sexuality in societies around the world, where a strict binary of sex and gender was imposed (i.e. there are only heterosexual men and women).

This history of cultural imperialism continues today, as queer people around the world “are caught in a spiral of exclusion and marginalization”<sup>[6]</sup>, particularly “when they are persons of colour, belong to ethnic minorities or are migrants”<sup>[7]</sup>.

All in all, from the Hijra of India to the Femminiello in Italy, and to the Guevedoche of the Dominican Republic, queer communities are extremely diverse and different between cultures, and it is critical to understand the queer people of your nation to advocate for them with effectiveness, cultural sensitivity, and respect.

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<sup>1</sup> 2SLGBTQI+ terminology – Glossary and common acronyms. (2024, September 17). Canada.ca. <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/2slgbtqi-plus-glossary.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Idem.

<sup>3</sup> Idem.

<sup>4</sup> A Map of Gender-Diverse Cultures | Independent Lens | PBS. (2024, March 14). Independent Lens. [https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits\\_map.html/](https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/content/two-spirits_map.html/).

<sup>5</sup> Idem.

<sup>6</sup> The Struggle of Trans and gender-diverse persons. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/struggle-trans-and-gender-diverse-persons>.

<sup>7</sup> Idem.



# The UN and Queer rights: from denial to defense

As of 2024, 36 countries have legalized same-sex marriage. In such countries, members of the LGBTQ+ community are legally protected from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Of course, systemic discrimination targeting queer people still prevails and severely limits LGBTQ+ people's job opportunities as well as their access to physical and psychological health services. Moreover, the systemic erasure of queer individuals in society has led to an alarming underrepresentation of LGBTQ+ people in positions of civil leadership despite the several laws that supposedly uphold the principle of equality.

In other countries, homosexuality has been decriminalized, although several social and other legal barriers remain. For instance, in India, the criminalization of "private consensual sex between men was ruled unconstitutional by India's Supreme Court" in 2018 (quote) but queer individuals still face persecution on a daily basis. Indeed, many lesbians have been "thrown out of their rental accommodation or out of their jobs" (quote) when their sexual orientation was revealed. Moreover, violence against queer persons often occurs due to social stigmas and is almost always carried out by the victim's immediate family.





## SECTION 1

# The UN and Queer rights: from denial to defense

Currently, the mainstream position of the UN holds that “States are already legally required to safeguard the human rights of LGBTI people under international human rights law, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”[1], as outlined in the 2019 edition of Born Free and Equal, a publication addressing States’ international law obligations in regards to queer rights from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Behind this hopeful statement, however, is a contentious history for recognition, representation, and inclusion in UN organizations.

The UN human rights culture we presently understand is radically different from what was initially intended at the foundation of the organization in 1948. Indeed, queer rights were “not initially recognised as a categorical human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the UN’s founding in 1948”. [2] Even worse, being gay or trans was considered a mental disease until the end of the 20th century, where the World Health Organization stopped considering homosexuality as a disease in 1992.

The transition from denying human rights claims on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity to embracing them in the contemporary UN human rights culture was slow and is still unfinished today. Here is a brief overview:

1975 UN Conference in Mexico marking International Women’s Year	Lesbians from the North and South engaged in feminist discussions about sexuality.[3]
1985 UN Women’s Conference in Nairobi	First public discussions of lesbianism in Kenya, challenging the notion that queerness is a Western concept.[4]
1994, <i>Toonen v. Australia</i> decision by the UNHRC	The UN Human Rights Committee recognizes that human rights include sexual orientation.[5]
2003, UNGA	First resolution denouncing extrajudicial and arbitrary killings of queer people in the UN General Assembly[6]
2007, Yogyakarta Principles, Yogyakarta, Indonesia	After recognizing well-documented patterns of discrimination and abuse, human rights experts developed legal principles detailing the obligations states have under international law to fulfill the human rights of queer people. [7]
2016, UNHCR	An Independent Expert on the protection from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) was appointed by the UNHCR to make recommendations to States and evaluate compliance with international law.[8]
2017, YP+10, Geneva, Switzerland	Ten years after their creation, the Yogyakarta Principles were updated[9] and nine additional principles along with 100 new state obligations were added.   ↑





## The UN and Queer rights: from denial to defense

Along with the UNHRC, many other UN bodies issued reports, statements, research, etc., on ending violence against queer people and ensuring their rights.

Currently, states are believed to have **five** core legal obligations towards queer people:  
 "Protect LGBTI people from violence;  
 Prevent the torture and ill treatment of LGBTI people;  
 Repeal laws criminalizing consensual same sex relations and transgender people;  
 Prohibit and address discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics;  
 Safeguard freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly for LGBTI people."  
 (OHCHR)

**However, considering the historical disenfranchisement of queer people around the world, is simply removing violence from their lives enough to guarantee their health, happiness, and self-actualization? Moreover, despite the growing momentum for queer human rights, is the UN strategy of deferring these human rights claims to different bodies that don't specialize in the matter effective for the advancement of queer rights?**

<sup>8</sup> Regeringen och Regeringskansliet. (2018, July 12). *Chronological overview of LGBT persons rights in Sweden*. Regeringskansliet. <https://www.government.se/articles/2018/07/chronological-overview-of-lgbt-persons-rights-in-sweden/>.

<sup>9</sup> Uganda: Court Upholds Anti-Homosexuality Act. (2024, April 5). *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/04/uganda-court-upholds-anti-homosexuality-act>.

<sup>10</sup> *India's LGBTQIA+ community notches legal wins but still faces societal hurdles to acceptance, equal rights*. (2024, May 19). UN News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/05/1149956>.

<sup>11</sup> Idem.

<sup>12</sup> *About LGBTI people and human rights*. OHCHR. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity/about-lgbti-people-and-human-rights>.

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Consortium, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, & School of Advanced Study, University of London. (2018). *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights (Neo)colonialism, Neoliberalism, Resistance and Hope*. In N. Nicol, A. Jjuuko, R. Lusimbo, N. J. Mulé, & S. Ursel (Eds.), *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights*. School of Advanced Study, University of London. <https://doi.org/10.14296/818.9780993110283>.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Consortium, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, & School of Advanced Study, University of London. (2018). *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights (Neo)colonialism, Neoliberalism, Resistance and Hope*. In N. Nicol, A. Jjuuko, R. Lusimbo, N. J. Mulé, & S. Ursel (Eds.), *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights*. School of Advanced Study, University of London. <https://doi.org/10.14296/818.9780993110283>.

<sup>15</sup> Idem.

<sup>16</sup> Idem.

<sup>17</sup> Idem.

<sup>18</sup> Idem.

<sup>19</sup> Idem.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Consortium, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, & School of Advanced Study, University of London. (2018). *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights (Neo)colonialism, Neoliberalism, Resistance and Hope*. In N. Nicol, A. Jjuuko, R. Lusimbo, N. J. Mulé, & S. Ursel (Eds.), *Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights*. School of Advanced Study, University of London. <https://doi.org/10.14296/818.9780993110283>.



# Legal Empowerment: Between Progress and Backlash

Section 1 of this background guide focused on the growing momentum for queer rights in different UN institutions. From recognizing the rights of queer people as human rights to bringing more visibility to queer issues through reports and studies, to setting out international standards of protection for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, these past decades have seen a slow, but seemingly positive progression for the human rights of queer people. However, digging lightly under this hopeful surface leads to a serious questioning of the efficiency of the UN's strategy for queer rights.

The first thing to realize about queer rights in the context of the UN is that "To this day, there is no legally binding international treaty that prevents states from persecuting queer people"[1].

According to the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, a treaty is "an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law." [2] In other words, treaties act as laws and countries that sign a treaty are legally obligated to follow its provisions. Otherwise, if a signatory does not respect a treaty it has signed, they are exposed to legal liability, meaning they can be sued in the relevant international courts like the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In the context of queer rights, because no human rights treaty specifically mentions protections from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, queer rights are much less recognized and respected by individual countries.

Along with an important gap of specific legal protections for queer people in international human rights law, there is a growing backlash against the progress achieved in the UN for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Indeed, as the discussions surrounding the expansion of the UN human rights regime have reached the conclusion that queer rights are human rights, a parallel debate developed around the "threats" that queer rights allegedly represent for some societies.

Before diving into the details of this conflict, providing geopolitical context is necessary.

Over the past decades, increasing tensions have arisen between mainly Western countries and their allies and a more Eastern bloc composed of Russia, China, and other countries. Without going into too much detail, this growing animosity has translated into the human rights discourse. For example, as some Western countries have been vocally pushing for the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ rights into the UN human rights regime, Russia has tabled many motions promoting the importance of "traditional values" (i.e. heteronormativity, nuclear family, etc.) [3].

In this sense, queer rights are increasingly becoming a geopolitical football between Western countries who signal their support for this cause, like the United States and the United Kingdom, and an opposite bloc led by Russia. This situation takes an ironic turn as one realizes that the US is also a leader of the backlash against queer rights. [4]

With this context information, let's now dive into the mechanics of this backlash and understand the shortcomings of the UN strategy of mainstreaming queer rights.

## SECTION 2

# Legal Empowerment: Between Progress and Backlash



Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have a fundamental role in UN institutions. They can advise committees, observe and contribute to some debates, and are regularly consulted by different UN bodies. The progress of queer rights since the 1970's is in part due to the awareness raising campaigns many international NGOs that focus of queer issues led in UN bodies.[5]

Simultaneously, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ international NGOs have used these same tools and openness to outside opinions to bring in points of view that delegitimize and attack queer rights. Organizations like the World Congress of Families and the Alliance Defending Freedom International all use the same UN mechanisms and structures "to coordinate the transnational diffusion of LGBT+ backlash." [6]

UN member-states are also instrumental in this backlash. Countries who are heavily religious or conservative are indeed keen to resist and even transgress the advances of queer rights at the international level. For instance, "Pope John Paul II coined the term "gender ideology" as a way of dismissing liberal norms around gender equality." [7]

For the Vatican, "gender ideology" is "'a growing confusion about sexual identity' that 'complicates the assumption of roles and sharing of tasks in the home'" [8]. Along with very religious countries, member-states that have histories of antagonism with the West have a proclivity to resist the inclusion of queer rights. As mentioned previously, Russia is a prime example of this phenomenon.

Now that some of the actors and methods of this manufactured backlash have been identified, understanding their arguments against the expansion of human rights protections to sexual orientation and gender identity is critical. In this sense, here is a brief summary of them:

2SLGBTQIA+ people represent a threat to some traditional and religious definitions of the family and gender roles; As mentioned above, some religious leaders, countries, and NGOs appeal to religious doctrines to reject protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Instead of recognizing the liberties and freedoms of queer people, these actors argue that, as 2SLGBTQIA+ people challenge traditional gender norms prescribed by tradition and religion, they are a direct "affront to social cohesion but also a direct challenge to God." [9]

Including queer rights as human rights is a threat to the sovereignty and self-determination of member-states; UN led initiatives that encourage countries to enact legal protections for queer people are often seen as another Western imposition on non-western countries. For instance, "in Poland and other post-Communist states, opponents of LGBT+ rights argue that they are an external imposition by the European Union." [10] Also, some African leaders deny the inclusion of queer people on the basis that it is another feature of Western imperialism. [11]





## Legal Empowerment: Between Progress and Backlash

### Case study: Poland

Between 2020 and 2023, Poland has been “recognised as the country with the least LGBTQ+-inclusive laws and policies in the European Union (EU)”[12] by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association, Europe division (ILGA-Europe).

This record of gross human rights negligence is closely linked with the political party that ruled Poland for many years since the 2000’s. From 2005 to 2007, and from 2015 to 2023, the Law and Justice (PIS) party, characterized by its conservatism, Euroscepticism, nativism (anti-immigration), and extreme anti-queer rhetoric and policies, is instrumental in Poland’s backlash against queer rights. However, to meaningfully appreciate the causes and consequences of this oppression against queer people, it is critical to understand the history behind it.

As briefly explained in the “General Background” section of this guide, the 1990’s saw many developments regarding queer rights. Indeed, especially in the European Union, to be queer started being viewed “as just another kind of minority status with equal claims to political inclusion and protections against discrimination.”[13] Seeing this, the Polish “hard-right” (political ideology based on extreme conservatism) began using queer people, especially gay people, as their political scapegoat to spread their Euroskeptic ideology.

Before expanding on the case of Poland, it must become clear why it is important to know about the specific political context of pre-European Union Polish politics. In essence, one must always understand the unique history of a country in regards to a specific issue. Although the backlash against queer rights is a global trend, one cannot overlook the unique reasons why hateful ideologies gain steam in certain regions and not others. Is it a religious matter? Is it because of political manipulations of the public opinion? Is it due to international pressures? Delegates are highly encouraged to research the political, religious, and social background of their country and see if they can identify direct links between their country’s history and its current position regarding queer rights.







## Legal Empowerment: Between Progress and Backlash

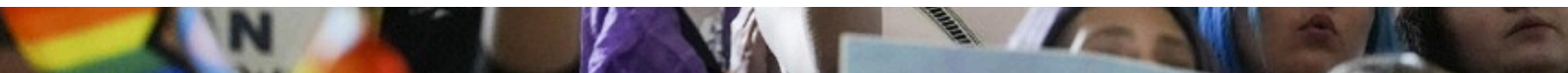
### Case study: Poland

In 1989, Poland became independent from the Soviet Union and started to slowly open itself to the world and to Europe in the following decade. As part of this shift to the globalized world, Polish people began to consider becoming a member-state of the European Union. Being part of the EU would mean many advantages for Polish people, among them integrating the European free market, which was seen as beneficial to the economy. However, becoming an EU member-state also meant integrating international treaties and governmental organisations like the European Court of Human Rights, which oversees the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 14 of the Convention proclaims that “The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour,”[14] etc. In a context where Poland had very conservative laws that were discriminatory, having supranational courts that could overrule Polish laws was seemingly unconscionable for a part of Polish society.

As such, different political parties started capitalizing and manufacturing these fears. Specifically, such parties began to “Europeanize” homosexuality by “linking homosexuality with European integration and presenting themselves as defenders of Polish values against this threat.”[15] Because of this “link” between the EU and homosexuality, which they argued was against their Catholic values, these hard-right political parties argued that “The EU is presented as a mortal threat to Polish national identity, to the very existence of a Polish sovereign state, to the well-being of the Polish economy, and to the core values of European Christianity.”[16]

One of these parties is the aforementioned PIS. In 2005, around a year after Poland’s accession to the European Union, Euroscepticism (an ideology rejecting or at least criticizing the EU) was at an all time high and PIS formed government until 2007. In 2015, PIS was reelected and formed government until 2023. In this eight-year rule, the party doubled down on its homophobia and adopted rhetoric and measures openly violating the fundamental rights of queer Poles. For example, the “PiS-led campaign involved the broadcasting of anti-LGBTQ+ films on state-controlled television, attempts to outlaw sex education”[17], repeatedly sued queer rights activists to intimidate them[18], and most horribly, encouraged regions’s adoption of a “Family Charter”, which called for “the exclusion of LGBT people from Polish society”.[19] Thankfully, after threats from the European Commission to withhold funds for the regions who adopted the Charter, almost all of them abandoned it.

All in all, the case of Poland is a great example of the politicization of queer identities by the right to push a nationalistic, conservative, and anti-EU agenda. In their research, delegates are encouraged to understand this process of backlash against queer rights and to find ways of successfully advancing queer rights without causing more harm to this vulnerable minority. Balancing the need to promote equality and anti-discrimination internationally is of capital importance in this committee, but it is as important to avoid that queer rights become weaponized against the people they are supposed to protect.





## SECTION 2

# Legal Empowerment: Between Progress and Backlash



### Sources

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<sup>22</sup> *Treaties as Binding International Obligation* | ASIL. (n.d.). <https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/2/issue/4/treaties-binding-international-obligation>.

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<sup>24</sup> Cooper-Cunningham, D., Hagen, J. J., Ramón, M. S. P., & Gifkins, J. (2023, July 28). U.N. Struggles to Protect Queer People as Transphobia Grows in Key Funders. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/07/28/united-nations-lgbtq-queer-rights-homophobia-transphobia-security-council/>.

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<sup>30</sup> Idem.

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<sup>32</sup> Bogatyrev, Konstantin, and Honorata Bogusz. "On the verge of progress? LGBTQ+ politics in Poland after the 2023 elections". *European Journal of Politics and Gender* (published online ahead of print 2024). <<https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088Y2024D000000024>>.

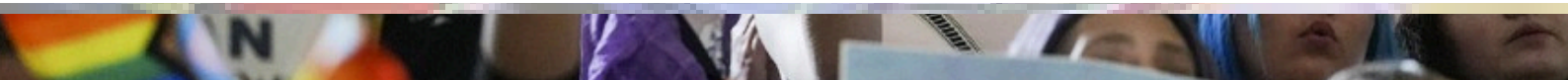
<sup>33</sup> Conor O'Dwyer. *Coming Out of Communism: The Emergence of LGBT Activism in Eastern Europe*. NYU Press, 2018. EBSCOhost, [research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6de2694a-d59e-3ca3-adca-2f84303b5b95](https://research.ebsco.com/linkprocessor/plink?id=6de2694a-d59e-3ca3-adca-2f84303b5b95).

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<sup>36</sup> Idem.

<sup>37</sup> Bogatyrev, K., & Bogusz, H. (2024). On the verge of progress? LGBTQ+ politics in Poland after the 2023 elections. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1332/25151088y2024d000000024>.





## SECTION 3

# Grassroots movements and non-governmental actions

As mentioned previously, outside the West, it is common to hear that queer identities are Western imports seeking to destabilize and eliminate “traditional values”. Such cultural beliefs are deeply embedded in social norms and discourses, making it extremely difficult for queer people who are members of these communities to live as their true selves.

It appears then, that the path towards full equality does not reside only in law, but in culture as well.

To apply (or even enact) laws empowering the equal rights of queer people all around the world, a strong social consensus around the acceptance of diverse sexualities and gender identities is fundamental. Otherwise, such laws will be seen as impositions, even attacks, from outside groups that threaten the sovereignty and authenticity of these communities.

**How then, can hostile social attitudes towards queer people be changed to acceptance and celebration without a harmful backlash against this very community? Delegates are encouraged to research how the social movements of their countries contributed to legislation empowering the equality and protection of queer people. Consider how NGO's, schools, social establishments like bars or museums, labour organizations, informal mass movements, etc. sparked change in social attitudes towards queer and dismantled (at least partly) the stigmatization of queer people and heteronormativity.**



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<sup>38</sup> Poland: Rule of Law Erosion Harms Women, LGBT People. (2024, May 19). *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/15/poland-rule-law-erosion-harms-women-lgbt-people>.

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# Conclusion

When discussing the expansion of human rights to queer people and stopping the mass violence they are subject to all around the world, it is fundamental to consider the local uniqueness of queer communities and identities of each region. Contrary to the “top-down” approach used by some Western countries to promote queer rights, this committee should explore innovative methods that will stop the worldwide backlash against queer rights and foster sustainable and effective international protections and empowerment of queer communities.

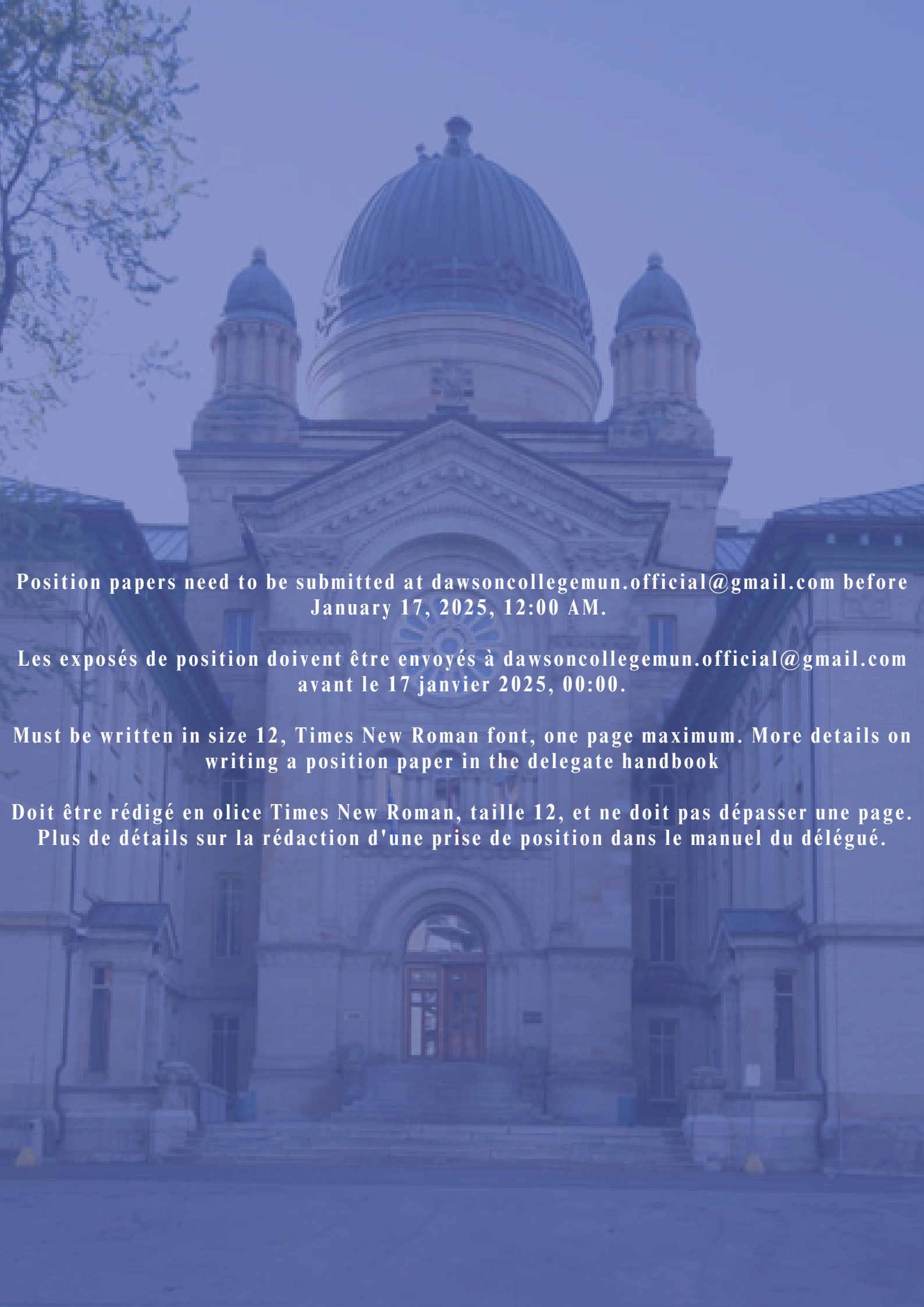
In their deliberations, delegates are encouraged to consider how other minorities are protected internationally and the effectiveness of these institutions and mechanisms. From the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the UN has adopted and created many treaties and committees to fulfil the promise of universal human rights, as prescribed by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR). In an intersectional framework, these existing institutions have great potential for the fulfillment of queer rights, seeing as queer people all around the world are women, Indigenous, and many other intersecting identities. Promoting queer rights then implies promoting feminism, decolonization, and anti-racism. Consequently, this committee will decide how the UN will protect queer people and affirm their human rights internationally.

Now, it is for queer people to be at the center of the UN human rights agenda.

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Olivier Lamoureux, and  
Magalie McKay

Chair and Vice-Chair of the DCMUN First Committee on Queer Rights.



**Position papers need to be submitted at [dawsoncollegemun.official@gmail.com](mailto:dawsoncollegemun.official@gmail.com) before January 17, 2025, 12:00 AM.**

**Les exposés de position doivent être envoyés à [dawsoncollegemun.official@gmail.com](mailto:dawsoncollegemun.official@gmail.com) avant le 17 janvier 2025, 00:00.**

**Must be written in size 12, Times New Roman font, one page maximum. More details on writing a position paper in the delegate handbook**

**Doit être rédigé en olice Times New Roman, taille 12, et ne doit pas dépasser une page. Plus de détails sur la rédaction d'une prise de position dans le manuel du délégué.**