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IDAHOBIT- "No one left behind: equality, freedom and justice for all"

For IDAHOBIT on 17 May, Yemisi writes about the persecution that many LGBT+ people still face across the world.

May 17 is International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). This year's theme is a call for unity: "**No one left behind: equality, freedom and justice for all**" - only through solidarity for each other will we create a world without injustice.

May 17 was chosen as the date to celebrate IDAHOBIT as the World Health Organisation (WHO) declassified homosexuality as a disease on 17 May 1990. 32 years later being LGBT+ is still illegal in 70 countries - the punishment in 12 being death. Same-sex relationships are illegal in many sub-Saharan African countries - a colonial legacy inherited by former British colonies which many haven't abolished.

1.5 billion people live under regimes that deny their right to love.

Roger Jean-Claude Mbede, a Cameroonian, died in prison after declaring his love for another man. Eric Lembembe was a Cameroonian gay activist, brutally murdered. Dwayne Jones was murdered in Jamaica after he attended a dance party dressed in women's clothing. Corrective rape targeted at lesbians is still prevalent.

This isn't just in African or Caribbean countries. In 2016, a horrific homophobic mass shooting in Orlando, Florida, saw a gunman kill 49 people and wound 53. Russia currently has many LGBT+ activists languishing in jail.

20 year old Iranian Alireza Fazeli-Monfared, was brutally murdered and beheaded by family after they discovered the Iranian military exempted him from service because of "sexual depravities". The discrimination against LGBT+ people in the military caused him to be outed with fatal consequences.

I'm from Nigeria, where same sex relationships carry a 14 year jail term and advocating for LGBT+ rights attracts a 10 year imprisonment. As a bisexual woman who had her life heavily impacted by this, I know first-hand the horrors criminalisation have wrought on LGBT+ people who live in societies where it is illegal to be your authentic, fabulous self. Being openly LGBT+ could be a matter of life and death.

There are many LGBT+ people fleeing oppression and violence across the world. Persecutions and discrimination have displaced many from their support systems. To start life afresh in an unknown land, they become refugees - a term which comes with its own stigma. There are many who never had the opportunity to flee an oppressive regime or the wrath of a lynching mob.

IDAHOBIT is a reminder that LGBT+ people still suffer persecution in many parts of the world and to stand up and say no to hate and promote policies that help dismantle discrimination. We cannot assume all is well just because we are not facing the same problems. Let us be consciously aware of the daily persecutions, discrimination, oppressions and violence others face which we might never experience - in the workplace, the streets, the family, in schools and community groups. Many are still afraid to come out of the closet for fear of what they stand to lose. Together we must stand in solidarity for voiceless LGBT+ people and let them know they are not alone or forgotten. Together we can end oppression and discrimination.

If you would like more information about Proud, including how to join, please email proud@pcs.org.uk.