

# WE REMAIN RESILIENT: PRIDE AROUND THE WORLD IN 2022

June 2023



OUTRIGHT  
INTERNATIONAL

# About Outright International

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## Outright International works together for better LGBTIQ lives.

Outright is dedicated to working with partners around the globe to strengthen the capacity of the LGBTIQ human rights movement, document and amplify human rights violations against LGBTIQ people, and advocate for inclusion and equality.

Founded in 1990, with staff in over a dozen countries, Outright works with the United Nations, regional human rights monitoring bodies and civil society partners. Outright holds consultative status at the United Nations, where it serves as the secretariat of the UN LGBTI Core Group.

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**Cover photo:** Taiwan Trans March 28 October 2022.  
Photo by Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association.

**Photo:** Holding a rainbow flag, amplifying our voices through Pride.

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# Introduction

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Across the world, Pride remains a protest: a salient act of resistance uniting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) people. As socio-cultural and political contexts evolve, Pride and other LGBTIQ visibility events celebrate resilience, progress, and courage, and showcase the persistence of LGBTIQ communities in constructing liberating alternatives to enforced heterosexuality and cisnormativity.

Outright International identified 102 countries worldwide where Pride and other LGBTIQ visibility events were held in 2022, with at least 63 countries holding Pride events both within and outside the capital city. These events aim at resisting state-sanctioned LGBTIQ-phobia, building public awareness about LGBTIQ populations through the reaffirmation of the existence of diversity, building community and collaboration within LGBTIQ populations, and celebrating gains. Pride does not always take the form of marches or parades; it has evolved to include festivals, performances, social events, press conferences, and more.

While many countries begin the celebration of Pride in capital cities, extending Pride beyond the capital is an indication of increased visibility, acceptance, and resilience. Case studies in this report on Sri Lanka, Peru, Malta and Namibia highlight this expansion of Pride within a country's borders and what it can achieve.

In 2021, Outright published its first Pride Around the World report, which sought to provide a global snapshot of what Pride looks like and means in different countries. We defined "Pride" as any public-facing, open, and visible event with the purpose of affirming the existence of LGBTIQ people, demanding recognition and protection of our rights, and celebrating progress. Like our 2021 and 2022 reports, this report focuses primarily on events that activists identified as "Pride," but also includes

other events aimed at advancing public visibility of LGBTIQ people, queer cultures, and human rights issues affecting LGBTIQ communities. It centers around case studies in ten countries: Australia, Germany, Jamaica, Malta, Namibia, Peru, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Türkiye, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. The case studies focus on new and notable Pride events, government crackdowns on Pride, and the involvement and inclusion of communities that have been historically underrepresented in many Pride events: intersex people, trans people, and LBQ women. Sri Lanka and Turkey were both included in Outright's initial Pride report, published in 2021, and are including once again because of the dramatic developments related to Pride – positive and negative – in these countries.

LGBTIQ people have faced serious threats to security and human rights. In some countries, Pride is not prioritized by movements for legitimate security or tactical reasons. Notwithstanding, in many localities, LGBTIQ rightsholders, activists, and organizations have remained resilient, implementing public-facing, visible Pride and LGBTIQ events aimed at affirming the existence of LGBTIQ people. This report documents the strife, successes, and goals of LGBTIQ activists through Pride: from Ukraine, where activists organize in the face of prolonged Russian aggression, to Namibia, where legal reform is piecemeal; from Sri Lanka, where a first Pride march was built on protest, to Malta, where the government works hand-in-hand with LGBTIQ communities to extend Pride beyond the main island. Activists work through the criminalization of same-sex acts between consenting adults, the absence of legal gender recognition, the invisibility of intersex people and queer women, and other forms of social and legal discrimination to promote inclusivity, create awareness, demand recognition and protection of rights, and celebrate progress.

# Methodology

This report is Outright International’s third in a series of annual reports on Pride Around the World. In 2021, the first report, *Pride Around the World*, identified 105 countries that had held any kind of public Pride event in recent years, and highlighted new and notable Prides. The 2022 report, *Visible: Pride Around the World in 2021*, found that in 2021 alone, 107 countries had held visibility events.

Outright’s 2023 report, like the previous reports, is based on an online survey, semi-structured interviews, and a literature review of news reports, social media posts, and reports by non-governmental

organizations and institutions. Between April 2022 and May 2023, Outright conducted 35 in-depth, individual semi-structured interviews remotely via video link or phone with activists from Australia, Germany, Jamaica, Malta, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Türkiye, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. The semi-structured interviews were aimed at understanding Pride movements in the countries, noting objectives and achievements of the LGBTIQ movements attributed to Pride, understanding the resilience of activists and organizations in hostile environments, and the legal, political, and social contexts in which these Pride and LGBTIQ visibility events take place. We also sought to highlight the visibility of specific populations: lesbian, bisexual, and queer people through Dyke\* March Berlin, transgender people through Trans Prides in Brighton and Melbourne, and intersex visibility and inclusion in local, national, and international LGBTIQ visibility events.

In addition, we distributed an online questionnaire across Outright networks of activists around the world, asking whether Pride or LGBTIQ visibility events took place in 2022. The survey was distributed in English, French, and Spanish, and allowed responses in any language. For our research purposes, we defined Pride and visibility events as “public-facing, open, and visible events with the purpose of affirming the existence of LGBTIQ people, demanding recognition and protection of our rights, and/or celebrating progress. This may include not only events labeled as ‘Pride’ but also



Photo: Taiwan Trans March 28 October 2022. Photo by Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association.

IDAHOBIT, Trans Visibility Day, and other similar events if they are public-facing.” Our online questionnaire also asked about locations of Pride events within and outside of capital cities, the existence of any new Prides in 2022, and about personal perspectives and experiences with Pride. We received 142 responses with respondents from 54 countries across the regions.

For countries from which we did not receive firsthand information through survey responses or semi-structured interviews, or where those responses conflicted as to the existence of Pride events, Outright conducted online research to confirm the existence of Pride in certain countries via news reports and social media posts. In other cases, we reached out to activists via email to confirm whether Pride had taken place in their countries.

Our data set for this report includes 196 countries: all 193 United Nations member states as well as three other countries, Kosovo, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Taiwan. Of those countries, we found that in 105 countries, activists held public Pride events were held in 2022, and in 63 of these countries, events were held in more than one city. In 91 other countries, as far as Outright could ascertain, no public Pride events took place in 2022.

In terms of limitations, Outright recognizes that small yet public-facing Pride events may take place in some countries without being on the radar of organizations from which Outright sought information for this report or major media houses that report on Pride. As in previous years, the figures reported this year are not unimpeachable, and we encourage readers to reach out if we are missing or have inaccurate information. In addition, we recognize that interviewees’ and survey respondents’ perspectives on Pride are not necessarily representative of their entire communities. Every participant in a Pride event anywhere in the world has a unique experience and perspective, and beyond this report, there are many more stories to be told.

# Pride by the Numbers

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Our findings show that LGBTIQ activists in at least 105 countries globally held public-facing Pride or other LGBTIQ visibility events in 2022, in person and online, through parades, marches, festivals, art exhibitions, workshops and panel discussions, fairs, drag shows, musical shows, film screenings, book readings, and sporting events, among others.

In at least 63 countries in 2022, Pride events were celebrated both within and outside the capital city. Expanding Pride beyond capital cities is extremely significant as it indicates the spread of acceptance, visibility, and recognition beyond urban centers.

When Outright began documenting the number of countries in which activists hold Pride events around the world, we anticipated that we might observe a relatively consistent upward trajectory. After all, more countries have decriminalized same-sex intimacy, which presumably might create more space for visibility, and Outright's research shows that the number of countries in which there are no known LGBTIQ organizations has steadily decreased over the last five years. But in 2022, the only countries in which Outright documented public Pride events for the first time were in the tiny European nation of Monaco and in Azerbaijan, where activists were unable to march, but held a Pride press conference as a public event. Meanwhile, Pride events that were held in three countries in 2021 did not appear to recur in 2022. Security challenges and economic limitations were among the factors that impacted Pride in 2022: in Myanmar, Pride was no longer possible following the military takeover – although LGBTIQ activists continued to be visible in the country's resistance movement – and in Papua New Guinea, an activist told Outright that the movement had no funds available for Pride events in 2022. Outright also did not find evidence of any public

Pride event in 2022 in Laos, where an event did take place in 2021.

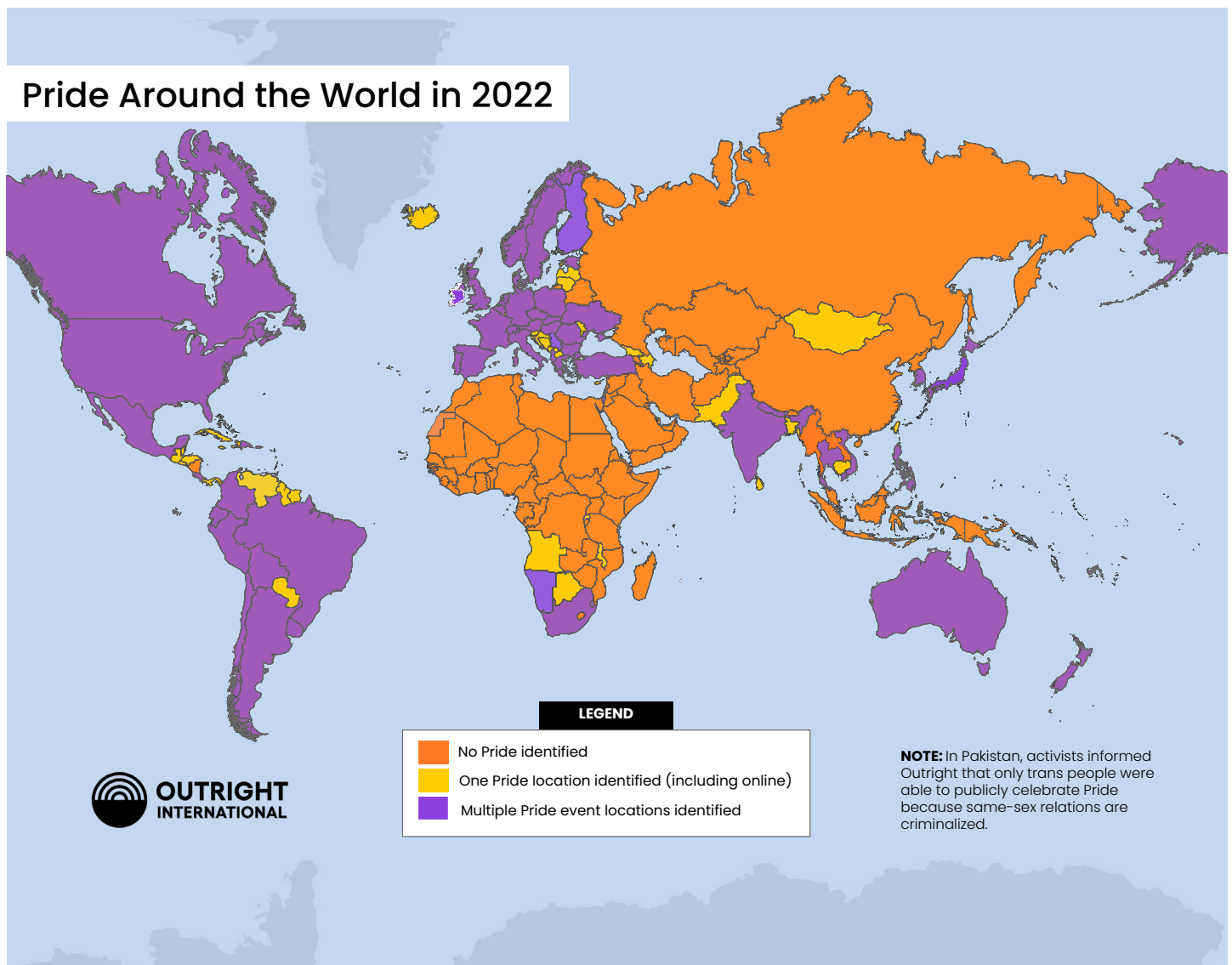
The research for this report also coincided with an onslaught of attacks on visible LGBTIQ organizing from anti-rights and anti-gender movements that often sought to restrict queer people's rights to freedom of association, assembly, and expression in the name of "protecting children." Attacks on Pride are taking place even in localities where the tradition of Pride is well established. In the US state of Florida, city officials cancelled a Pride parade in 2023 "and restricted other pride events to people 21 years and older."<sup>1</sup> Turkish police have consistently and violently clamped down on Pride marchers in the country over the last several years, but the 2022 crackdown was by far the worst on record.<sup>2</sup> Symbols of queer visibility are also attacked in events other than Pride: in Bosnia and Herzegovina, assailants verbally and physically attacked women's rights marchers for holding a rainbow flag on International Women's Day.<sup>3</sup> These assaults on Pride may deter some new or nascent Pride celebrations from taking place.

While Outright did not observe an increase in countries where movements publicly celebrated Pride in 2022, we did observe an increase in countries in which Pride is held outside a capital city. This means that where pioneering activists have carved out space for their movements to exist, those movements are developing an increasingly national presence. In 2022, one location that held its first Pride was the island of Gozo in Malta, a small, socially conservative country that has nevertheless built a name for itself as a beacon of LGBTIQ inclusivity. In Namibia, beyond the capital city of Windhoek, the regions of Kunene, Swakopmund, and Walvis Bay all saw Pride events in 2022, and in Peru, Pride marches were held for the first time in the regions of Abancay and Cajamarca.



We also documented a significant scaling up of Pride in Sri Lanka, where LGBTIQ people held country’s first Pride marches in both the capital, Colombo, and the northern city of Jaffna. Sri Lanka has held more low-key Pride events and at least one public LGBTIQ protest in the past, but 2022 was the first time Pride manifested in marching in the streets. Estonia, for the first time, extended Pride beyond the capital, Tallinn, to a second city, Tartu.

The following map demonstrates where public Pride events were held in 2022.



# I. Overview: Pride Around the World in Many Ways

Participation in Pride marches and other public events has several objectives. Pride serves to make LGBTIQ communities visible, to protest and demand action from the state for the recognition of rights, to demand respect and acceptance from society, and to provide a space for celebration to reaffirm the identities of LGBTIQ people. Organizers and participants find personal meaning to Pride, based on their own life experiences as LGBTIQ people.

In some countries, Pride, even though held publicly, may not take the form of parades. Marching in the streets is not always safe or desirable, but visibility can take many forms. For instance, in 2022 in Azerbaijan, three activists held a press briefing to mark Pride “for the first time in eight years” to discuss LGBTIQ people’s rights and the challenges posed by widespread homophobia and violence.<sup>4</sup> They had hoped to hold a Pride march for the first time but were unable to due to the dire situation for LGBTIQ people. In Monaco, the first public Pride event was held by way of a cocktail party with government participation.<sup>5</sup>

This chapter shares reflections from LGBTIQ activists around the world who responded to Outright International’s Pride survey about

what Pride means to them, or what it would mean, if Pride were possible.

## Pride as Inclusivity

All over the world, creating safe spaces for people marginalized by mainstream societal standards is a human rights priority. Many LGBTIQ people Outright



**Photo:** Drag Night Namibia “Rain-Ball”, Windhoek, December 2022. Credit: Namibia Equal Rights Movement.

contacted for this research shared similar sentiments, describing Pride as “unquestioned inclusivity for all” and a reminder that “we are here and will always be.”<sup>6</sup>

Jholerina Timbo, a transgender rights activist from Namibia, sums up the message of inclusion:

Pride for me is like ubuntu – I am because you are. It is a time of unity, a time of resilience. Pride means community, ubuntu, inspiration, innovation, support, reinventing culture, and dismantling oppressive systems.<sup>7</sup>

According to Yi-Ling Lin of the Taiwan Rainbow Civil Action Association, the current main organizer of Pride in Taiwan, “Pride helps us create an avenue for acceptance, letting everyone know that it is okay to support us. Through Pride, we also can create the safe space for sexual minorities, whom society tries to take away our voice, to show ourselves.”<sup>8</sup>

For Clauco Velasquez, one of the founders of the Iquitos Pride March in Peru:

[Pride] means freedom, love, diversity, colors. And the empowerment of the youth. Not only LGBT youth, but youth in general. It means the involvement of those nuclear families, those families committed to the fight for rights, with the participation of these young people, attending, recording, applauding, laughing with them, helping in the majesty of the colors. The march is union, we try to unify.<sup>9</sup>

For Beha Yildiz, a trans nonbinary activist from Türkiye, Pride “means solidarity and visibility.”<sup>10</sup> Yildiz adds:

For me, it’s seeing so many queer people without knowing them and they’re doing their makeup and maybe wearing their best outfit. And we are actually going to somewhere to be united, be like one fist. It’s kind of very empowering. Like gathering for a certain claim and shouting and claiming our rights and demanding our rights seems very empowering for me. We are choosing to believe in solidarity. We are believing, and are there for everyone. So it’s a very empowering process for everyone. It makes me quite hopeful. At the end of the day, our solidarity is maybe bigger now more than ever. It’s the biggest all the time.

And I believe that the changes are here to take us to where we want to be.<sup>11</sup>

In countries where Pride cannot be held publicly, activists also see its potential value as a force for inclusion. For an activist in Kenya, where political homophobia is gaining ground, publicly celebrating Pride would be a way of creating “safe spaces that allow [people in] our community to freely express themselves in the clothing they wish, sharing experiences on their lived realities, coping with challenges and how best to overcome them.”<sup>12</sup>

## Pride as a Celebration and Visibility

Pride honors progress made in advancing LGBTIQ rights, the existence of sexual and gender diversity in humanity, and the truth of courage, perseverance, resilience, and dignity. Through Pride, LGBTIQ people worldwide shed light on our collective and individual identities, experiences, successes, and struggles. As a result, the privilege of living one’s truth is celebrated through Pride for many LGBTIQ people. In Suriname, after having attended an LGBTIQ rights advocacy event and party, Achmad K. (pseudonym) recounts:

Pride means openness, leadership, mobilization, freedom and collaboration to me. Pride opens doors for LGBTQ persons to be themselves, to interact with other LGBTQ persons and also informs non-LGBTQ people of our existence.<sup>13</sup>

Jholerina Timbo of Namibia asserts: “Pride is coming out to celebrate the fact that we’re alive and can be there to carry one another.”<sup>14</sup> The need for visibility is shared across borders. An activist from the Philippines adds that “Pride events help create visibility on the issues of LGBTIQ Filipinos. It also helps collectivize the call to pass progressive legislations in the country.”<sup>15</sup>

According to Yi-Ling Lin of the Taiwan Rainbow Civil Action Association, “Pride is the main way of letting people know that we are here, we exist, we are not weird, except everyone is a weirdo.”<sup>16</sup>

The idea of Pride as a celebration of pride in identity is true for Simphiwe L. (psuedonym) from Eswatini, who expressed that: “Pride to me is celebrating and

acknowledging my existence as a lesbian woman and also taking into account how far we have come as a community to celebrate ourselves.”<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Pride can be seen as courage, according to a respondent from Bangladesh: “Courage to be free, courage to be who I am, courage to advocate for human rights, courage to love, and most significantly, courage to live my life according to my own desires.”<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the ability to celebrate Pride publicly is a pointer to societal acceptance, which is also celebrated. For instance, a respondent stated that “Pride affirms that LGBTIQ persons no longer have to hide and that they are slowly gaining acceptance in St. Lucia.”<sup>19</sup> Pride is also a channel for providing visibility to populations otherwise excluded from the forefront within LGBTIQ communities. According to Bel M. (pseudonym), an activist in Germany, “I have been organizing Dyke\* March Berlin for 10 years now to increase lesbian visibility. But the main Pride – called CSD in Germany – is still also very important for me as a lesbian.”<sup>20</sup> This perspective is mirrored by Barsha (pseudonym) from Bangladesh, who stated that: “Pride is the first step of visibility within the LGBTIQ+ community, as many members reside in rural areas without internet and are unaware that such a community exists.”<sup>21</sup>

In Tunisia, where Pride events per se do not currently take place, activists nonetheless organize some public events that enhance visibility. One Tunisian activist involved in organizing public events describe this form of activism as a taste of what Pride could be:

Both events hold a special place in my heart because they allowed me to reach members of the community that I wouldn’t have otherwise met. The sense of togetherness that comes from participating in the implementation of these events is priceless, the best way I can describe it is emotional sustenance for the days where we’re not celebrating, but grieving a loss in the community or petitioning for the release of one of us from jail. We don’t have Pride in its most familiar sense here yet, but we’re getting there, and watching people walk into a play reluctant about its subject matter but leave it with more empathy for the community just gives you a boost of hope that one day, we could march in celebration instead of opposition.<sup>22</sup>

Noelle Campbell of J-FLAG in Jamaica restates the importance of visibility:

It’s very important to be in spaces that people feel safe, people feel visible, people feel seen, people feel heard. People can actually enjoy themselves without wondering if someone is going to say or do something. And I think that to me, that’s what Pride looks like, as simple as it sounds. It’s really important to be able to be in spaces that you are visible.<sup>23</sup>

For Omar van Reenen, a nonbinary LGBTIQ rights activist from Namibia:

I think Pride is everything. Pride is a celebration of who we are and our culture. Pride is a validation that we belong in Namibia, that we are African, that we are Namibian, that we are queer and there’s nothing demonic or satanic our unnatural about us. That we are a big community based on love and we are here to spread the love and restate our right to exist.<sup>24</sup>

Speaking about the first Pride march in Abancay, Peru, Naysha Huamanñahui told Outright that:

**Photo:** Trans rights activists at Portobello Library on 14 March 2023, in Edinburgh, Scotland. Photo by Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images.



I will always take with me that image of when we passed by a school and the whole student body was glued to the window just to see us, and they were like 'I know her, I know them.' It felt so nice because we didn't feel alone. And there were people who looked at us and said, 'They really exist, and they're here marching.'<sup>25</sup>

Friedel Dausab, a gay man and Namibian LGBTIQ rights activist explains the personal impact Pride has on him in this manner:

Pride is celebrating that I'm alive. For me personally it means celebrating that I'm alive as a person living with HIV. The visibility is also so important – for me to be able to show my face, to be able to walk down the street, openly, as a gay man. It is so powerful and liberating for me. Pride also opens the eyes of people to see that lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex people are so diverse in many ways. I'm happy to be a part of showing this diversity.<sup>26</sup>

For Esan Regmi, an intersex rights activist from Nepal, Pride presents an opportunity:

To present who I am and to be proud of who I am and also to show visibility. Because, you know, in our queer movement, people feel that there are very few number of intersex individuals, but we are not very few. It is because there is no data collection process and there are only few organizations working on intersex persons' rights. That's why we are very few. There is lack of understanding, there is lack of acceptance ... For me, Pride is to show visibility, to celebrate who I am, and help create understanding and acceptance.<sup>27</sup>

## Pride as Protest

LGBTIQ people around the world continue to contend with homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and intersexphobia. Similarly, many LGBTIQ people face intersectional forms of discrimination with sexism, racism, ethnicism, and ableism, among others. Hence, Pride is an act of protest, challenging the negative hierarchies and repressive systems.

Jholerina Timbo of Namibia explains how Pride itself is an act of protest:

[Pride] is a time of showing each other love in a world that is telling us that we can't be, it's wrong to be, that "you are an abomination." It's always a challenge accessing services and living. After enduring discrimination in health care, at the banks, and other spaces, for a year, being among community [at Pride] reinvigorates my passion to continue to advocate and fight, realizing that this journey isn't only for me as I am, but for the young people who experience discrimination and rejection from family and society. Pride is also to remind younger people that we are here, and they are not alone, and that we strive to create a world where they do not have to suffer the discrimination we experienced.<sup>28</sup>

For Maribel Ryes, one of the organizers of the Lima March in Peru, Pride is "the largest political demonstration in Peru in relation to the impact it has on people's lives."<sup>29</sup> Ryes adds:

The fact that people go to the march and that they feel complete, even if it is only for five hours, seems to me to be a great contribution to the development of people. [And for activists] it has been the space that has allowed me to work on this issue of claiming rights, to feel that I am doing something in my society.<sup>30</sup>

Naysha Huamanñahui of Peru describes how Pride can strengthen generations of a movement:

We are here, we exist here and we are not going to leave. What is more, we are going to leave a lot of pillars where the people who come after us will know where to lean on and we will never, never leave them alone. Because beyond our existence we are a resistance.<sup>31</sup>

# II. Pride and Dissent: Sri Lanka's Grassroots Freedom Pride

## Legal, Social, and Political Context

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, with a challenging history of ethnonational strife. The armed conflict between Tamil militants, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and the government of Sri Lanka lasted some three decades, with major hostilities developing in the second half of the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>32</sup> This armed conflict and its violent atrocities, characterized in queer literature such as Sri Lankan Canadian writer Shaym Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy*, continues to shape the sociopolitical challenges of so-called post-war Sri Lanka (in the years that followed the final military victory of the Sri Lankan armed forces against the LTTE in 2009).<sup>33</sup>

Aside from ethnonational politics, Sri Lanka has also witnessed two major youth insurrections, which emerged as protest campaigns of youth from underprivileged backgrounds against a deeply extractivist and exploitative economy, as well as a classist and discriminatory society. The first insurrection, which occurred in April 1971, was brutally suppressed by the then government headed by Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike, the world's first woman prime

minister. The second insurrection took place in 1988-89 and was also addressed with unprecedented state violence against youth who played an active role in the insurrection. This suppression involved state-run torture chambers and sites where protesters, especially young women, were subjected to sexual violence. The state armed forces have been systematically accused by Tamil rights groups, academics, international



Photo: Pride month in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Sunday, 4 June 2023. Photo by AP.

watchdogs, and supranational bodies of regularly deploying sexual violence as a means of domination during the 30-year war, primarily targeting Tamil women. This culture of impunity, and the state’s justification of it on the grounds of “national security” and “national sovereignty,” have primarily characterized life and politics in Sri Lanka over the last five decades.

## LGBTQ Movements in Sri Lanka: A Brief Overview

It is in this socio-politically volatile context that the emergence of a discourse on LGBTQ rights in the country can be best conceptualized. The Sri Lankan Penal Code consists of British colonial-era legislation that criminalizes same-sex sexual activity.<sup>34</sup> The development of early LGBTQ organizing in Sri Lanka can be traced to the 1990s, when Companions on a Journey, a local LGBTQ rights collective, was created by Sherman de Rose in 1994. A key development in the subsequent years was the development of what came to be known as the Women’s Support Group, a collective of lesbian and queer women that was the first of its kind. The subsequent creation of Equal Ground by activist Rosanna Flamer-Caldera attracted international attention to the multiple challenges faced by non-heteronormative Sri Lankan people.<sup>35</sup> In terms of trans organizing, advocacy that began in the late 2000s led to the creation of the Venasa Network, a collective devoted to the rights of non-cisnormative citizens.<sup>36</sup> The subsequent creation of collectives such as the National Transgender Network, and recent additions such as the Voice of Hope Trust, have further helped develop the trans movement in the country.

In northern Sri Lanka – the theatre of intense military activity for three decades – the end of military activity in 2009 led to a decade of many post-war challenges, including continued securitization, challenges to civil liberties, gender-based violence, and economic precarity which has adversely affected women and women-led households. Despite these challenges, if not as part of addressing them, Tamil trans and queer communities have been developing their initiatives, in the form

of the Jaffna Sangam, Jaffna Transgender Network, Anichcham, and other grassroots collectives. Today, Sri Lanka is home to a vibrant LGBTQ community, with many organizations specialized in different aspects of advocacy, from HIV prevention-focused healthcare, trans healthcare, queer women’s advocacy, and more. While some of this work takes place within a traditional non-profit sector framework, other groups such as the Chathra Network and the Community Welfare Development Fund have been developed as left-leaning iterations of queer advocacy. One political party, National People’s Power (NP), a coalition led by the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) (the key vector behind the 1971 and 1988-89 youth insurrections), has publicly expressed its support – in principle – of LGBTQ rights.

In early 2023, a member of the country’s unicameral parliament presented a private member’s bill calling for the repeal of British laws that criminalize same-sex relations.<sup>37</sup> In May 2023, the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka cleared the path for this bill to proceed, issuing a ruling that the bill was not inconsistent with the Constitution of Sri Lanka.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, this bill has been the subject of controversy and has not garnered sufficient support within Parliament, causing activists who have been carrying out efforts to achieve holistic queer liberation to express skepticism.<sup>39</sup> Sri Lanka remains a deeply homophobic and transphobic country, with severe



Photo: Sri Lankans march in the first public LGBTIQ march during Pride Month, June 2022. Photo by Pasan 2022.

curtailments of basic freedoms to all citizens, which adversely affect sexual and gender minorities. There is little discussion of intersex human rights, which remains a body of rights on which substantive work remains to be developed in Sri Lanka.

## Pride March 2022: Context, Planning and Execution

2022 was a year of volatility in Sri Lanka, which demonstrated the contradictions in the country's democratic system. The burgeoning sovereign debt crisis was being felt across all walks of life, leading to a mass protest movement of unprecedented proportions. This protest campaign widely came to be known by the Sinhala word aragalaya, which roughly translates as "protest." The protestors created a protest campaign site – a protest village – in Colombo's iconic shoreline Galle Face Green, in front of the Presidential Secretariat, and in close proximity to major seats of government. This village was baptized "GotaGoGama," which translates as the "village that calls for the ousting of Gota," referring to the protestors' unanimous call for then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign. Unlike any other protest campaign in Sri Lanka's post-1948 history, the aragalaya at GotaGoGama attracted citizens from a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds, social classes, and

ethnicities. From the onset, LGBTQ activists were present in the GotaGoGama protest space.

It is in this context of a rejuvenated spirit of public protest that the Pride march of 2022 took place on 25 June.<sup>40</sup> This march was preceded by a Rainbow Pride Walk organized on 11 June by LGBTQ groups based in Jaffna, the capital of northern Sri Lanka and the epicentre of the 30-year secessionist war.<sup>41</sup>

Rashmi N., a trans woman who participated in the Colombo Pride march and the aragalaya protest movement, said of the march:

It was truly a case of queer people from diverse backgrounds coming together. No one claimed the pride parade for themselves. It was independently organized as a collective action.<sup>42</sup>

While Pride was a protest, there were also recent gains to celebrate. The LGBTIQ population had recently experienced a "major win" with a decision by the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women holding that the Sri Lankan Penal code violates lesbian and bisexual women's rights to non-discrimination by virtue of criminalizing same-sex acts between consenting adults.<sup>43</sup>

This Pride march was built upon previous LGBTQ activism, including a silent public protest in opposition to a coup attempt in October 2018.<sup>44</sup> As one commentator noted, this march was the first of its kind, in the sense that it was a large-scale Pride march, during Pride month, which was part of a broader political movement.<sup>45</sup>

The march was attended by a broad spectrum of people representing diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.<sup>46</sup>

One key factor that defines Sri Lanka's Pride parade is its departure from what some activists describe as the non-profit industrial complex. In Sri Lanka, just as in many other Global South countries with anti-LGBTQ laws and practices, LGBTQ rights advocacy takes place within the non-profit sector and is almost exclusively



Photo: Pride parade in Colombo on 25 June 2022. Photo by Thilina Kaluthotage/AP.



financed by the global philanthropic institutions based in the Global North. These channels of funding have been complemented by sources of funding from Western embassies and high commissions. While the non-profit advocacy sector has made invaluable, life-saving, and life-giving contributions to Sri Lankan LGBTQ people, the inevitable fault lines of dependency on donor funding also comes with its share of limitations. In the past, Pride events have been held almost exclusively in English, at cultural centers affiliated with Western embassies and high commissions in Colombo, at local offices of supranational bodies, at ambassadors' residences, and in some cases at high-profile luxury hotels. Due to language barriers and socioeconomic dividing lines, they are only accessible to the privileged due to the island's class stratification. The 2022 Pride march was a tremendously historic watershed in Sri Lankan queer organizing, in the sense that it was the first ever large-scale queer event to be held entirely without diplomatic or Global North philanthropic support.<sup>47</sup>

## Backlash: Challenges and Social Conservatism

While the Pride marches in Colombo and Jaffna faced no physical obstacles, they were not immune to wide-ranging opposition both on and off social media. Many Sri Lankans, including aragalaya protestors, questioned the aims of the Colombo march and its connection with the protest campaign. Aisha R., an LBQ participant interviewed for the present report, noted:

The day of the march, we didn't face much bullying or harassment. It was probably because there was a lot of us there. But on other days of the aragalaya, going around with a Pride flag used to trigger a lot of verbal hate and incitements to physical abuse from fellow protestors. Although we were united by

the call for a system change, homophobia was very much present.<sup>48</sup>

In the weeks that followed the Colombo Pride parade, the old guard of the Sri Lankan political class took control of the government and reinforced its power base. As soon as incumbent President Ranil Wickremesinghe assumed office, the armed forces were deployed to execute a severe crackdown on protests. Within days, the GotaGoGama village was destroyed, and people were chased away from the site.<sup>49</sup>

This state-sanctioned armed suppression of the aragalaya had a negative effect on the progressive dialogues and rights discourses that accompanied it. In the months that followed, the state began arresting key actors involved in protest campaigns, under antiterrorism legislation.<sup>50</sup> Many international observers, including UN special procedures and treaty bodies mandate holders, have condemned Sri Lanka's use of emergency measures to crackdown on protests.<sup>51</sup>



Photo: Freedom Pride Parade in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 4 June 2023. Photo by Pasan 2023.

This erosion of human rights in the 2022–2023 quarter has affected social justice movements. Despite such opposition, and in the face of substantial challenges, the organizers of the 2022 Pride parade managed to prevail, and they hosted an even bigger Pride parade in Colombo on 4 June 2023. The 2023 parade, named the Freedom Pride Parade, was an entirely grassroots effort with no dependence on diplomatic, foundation, or corporate funding. One of the organizers wrote on social media:

In addition to state obstruction, we also had the real fear of (state-sponsored) right-wing thugs attacking us. These fears are founded on the increasing atmosphere of fascism in [Sri Lanka], egged on by a [government] wishing to distract from a shambolic agenda of austerity and repression. Sadly, the apprehension was also due to resistance from institutional quarters of the LGBTQI+ community, based on (understandable) fears of reprisal & some (not-so-valid) gatekeeping. Formalized activism often narrows the imagination, about what can be done & who is included.<sup>52</sup>

The 2023 Parade led to high levels of abuse against the LGBTQ people, especially on social media platforms. However, the precedent it has set – by carrying out a public event that was a 100 percent grassroots initiative that was not supported by any Western embassy or high

commission, or global philanthropic funding – sets the stage for more proactive and extensive SOGIESC rights advocacy.

## Conclusion: Next Steps and Visibility

Sri Lanka is a socially conservative state where any form of LGBTQ advocacy faces substantive challenges. Despite being one of the first countries in the non-Western world to achieve universal suffrage in 1931, it is also a deeply volatile state with scars of long-standing ethnonational strife, a 30-year war, unresolved issues of minority rights, and high levels of institutionalized misogyny. In such a context, the LGBTQ community has made significant forward strides despite persistent challenges and backlash from the state, elements of the general public, and religious establishments. It is against this backdrop that the 2022 Pride march and the 2023 Freedom Pride Parade represent historic milestones not only in LGBTQ rights advocacy, but also in the broader sphere of human rights advocacy in general.



Photo: Sri Lankan trans activists participate in a Pride march as part of a larger protest movement June 2022. Photo by Pasan 2022.

# III. Ukraine: “I Believe That It’s Forbidden For Us Not to Hold Pride”

## Legal and Social Context

Pride in Ukraine began as a response to a looming threat. In 2012, the Ukrainian parliament was poised to vote on a “gay propaganda” ban modeled on the kind gaining ground in Russia. In response, 15 activists from across Ukraine decided to plan a protest, according to Lenny Emson, acting director of Kyiv Pride. “The movement united,” Emson said, but “we were kind of living in a bubble, because we expected we could just go on the street and march.”<sup>53</sup>

As participants assembled in May 2012, they were met by hundreds of far-right counter-protesters who arrived by the busload: “We were like, ‘Oh, my God, we didn’t expect that our opponents are so well prepared, well-financed, and well [organized].”<sup>54</sup>

The police refused to do anything to protect them, so organizers canceled the march at the last minute. Some march participants were savagely beaten in broad daylight shortly after a press conference, yet no one was ever arrested for this violence, Emson said:

What struck me personally was that in Ukraine, people

can commit ... such crime and [walk] away. Nobody’s actually interested in pressing charges or punishing it because societal attitudes are on their side. Like, ‘They did something good. They punished a gay guy.’<sup>55</sup>

A number of high-profile guests came from the EU to participate the following year, forcing the police to take steps to protect the march. The police cordoned



**Photo:** Marchers at Kyiv–Warsaw Pride 2022 show solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Russia’s invasion. Photo by J. Lester Feder, Outright International.

off a large section of downtown Kyiv while thousands of anti-LGBTIQ protesters mobbed outside. A march of sorts did take place inside the barricades, Emson said, but protestors were outnumbered by reporters, and no spectators could watch the event. Then participants were evacuated by buses. Despite the limitations, “it was a great milestone in the history of the LGBTQ movement.”<sup>56</sup>

Kyiv Pride continued to be held under heavy police protection in 2021, but security was professional and effective. The city center was closed down the night before, and police erected a fence along the route and screened everyone who entered. This was the first Pride since the COVID-19 pandemic and turnout was good, with no incidents of violence documented.<sup>57</sup> Emson told Outright that:

We’re very proud of our people who were brave enough [to participate]; like 7,000 people were there marching. We are proud of the police [for] cooperating, and they were taking the job very seriously.<sup>58</sup>

The 2021 march had an eight-point manifesto calling for marriage equality and passage of hate crimes legislation.

And while the march was a logistical success, the security measures blunted its impact: “We have no spectators, which is smart... it protects us. On the other hand, it makes us pretty much invisible for people who would really want to come and support us.”<sup>59</sup>

## 2022 Kyiv-Warsaw Pride

Kyiv Pride organizers were in the middle of planning for the 2022 march when Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As the Kyiv Pride organization scrambled to set up a shelter and provide other support to LGBTIQ Ukrainians, the team began thinking of how they would hold Pride during active fighting and martial law. There was never any doubt they would hold the march: the question was how. According to Emson, the Russian invasion reaffirmed the need for a Pride march: “We need to march. We need to use this great advocacy tool as a march for equality to promote our rights. But we needed to change the approach.”<sup>60</sup>



**Photo Left:** Drag queen Marlen Scandal at joint Kyiv-Warsaw Pride 2022 March for Peace, Warsaw, Poland, 25 June 2022. Photo by J. Lester Feder, Outright International.

**Photo Right:** Ukrainian activists gather the night before joint Kyiv-Warsaw Pride March 2022 to show solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Russia’s invasion. Photo by J. Lester Feder, Outright International.

Organizers, therefore, decided they would take the march to another European capital. And instead of focusing its messaging on seeking change from the Ukrainian government, the march would seek to rally the international queer community to support Ukraine's fight to preserve its independence:

Warsaw was the logical choice. Poland was the country that accepted the biggest amount of Ukrainian refugees, and Polish [queer] organizations ... provided a lot of help to LGBTQI refugees from Ukraine.... [We were] bringing our kind of gratitude and respect to Warsaw.<sup>61</sup>

Julia Maciocha, chair of Warsaw's pride event, the Equality Parade, said she had met Lenny Emson at World Pride in Copenhagen in 2021 and already had been thinking of ways to collaborate because of the large number of Ukrainians living in Warsaw.<sup>62</sup> When Emson proposed bringing Kyiv Pride to Warsaw, Maciocha did not hesitate. All Polish Pride events also suspended fundraising for the year, instead directing support to Ukraine.

The Warsaw march was declared a "March for Peace," and thousands thronged through central Warsaw in June behind a contingent of more than 30 Ukrainian activists representing at least 12 different organizations, including

Alliance Global, Cohort, Fulcrum UA, Gay Alliance Ukraine, Gay Alliance Ukraine Vinnytsia, Insight, Kharkiv Pride, LGBT Association LIGA, Odesa Pride, Specter, Sphere, and Virus Off. Unlike in past years, the message was not aimed at winning change from Ukrainian policymakers; instead, they wanted to rally support for the war effort from the international queer community.<sup>63</sup> They even decided not to collaborate with Ukrainian press, Emson said, "because our message was directed to the outside, to a European audience."<sup>64</sup>

The Kyiv-Warsaw March not only promoted the united queer spirit but helped in creating solidarity in the face of national aggression. The Ukrainian delegation ended the march by singing the national anthem. As Emson recalls, "We were in union all together... the whole crowd was singing with us. It was a beautiful moment."<sup>65</sup> Maciocha describes it as "a triumph of the movement."<sup>66</sup> She also noted that it was also received very differently than previous Warsaw Equality Marches inside Poland. In previous years, news media would frequently publish homophobic content about the march, but this event was met with near-total silence on the right: "I think that was really difficult for them to attack it. And we had much fewer attacks from outside of the community."<sup>67</sup>

However, there was a noisy backlash from inside the queer community, which caught Maciocha by surprise. It came from a sizeable queer Russian population in Warsaw, some of which responded angrily when organizers requested that people not bring Russian flags to the march. Maciocha told Outright that people sent messages to her and her mother threatening physical and sexual violence.<sup>68</sup> She also had to greatly increase the security budget for the march because a group threatened to rush the stage with a Russian flag during Emson's speech.<sup>69</sup> As Maciocha said, "For the first time, we were not fighting with Neo-Nazis ... but we had this absolutely awful situation that was happening within our community. That was painful, so painful."<sup>70</sup>



**Photo:** Marchers at Kyiv-Warsaw Pride 2022 show solidarity with Ukraine in the face of Russia's invasion. Photo by J. Lester Feder, Outright International.

## Kharkiv Pride

In Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city sitting just 20 miles from the Russian border, LGBTIQ activists felt it was essential to hold a Pride event inside the city even though it had endured months of shelling. For the community, "I believe that it's forbidden for us not to hold Pride," said Stanislava Petlytsia, community and event manager with the local queer organization Sphere.<sup>71</sup> Petlytsia added:

We're so close to Russia, and all these [negative] forces are just here in the air coming from Russia, all these bloggers, all this Russian propaganda TV. It's just so easy to get all these messages from that side of the border. And that's why if you keep silent, people will just forget about us.<sup>72</sup>

Kharkiv has almost never had a "normal" Pride year. When Pride was organized for the first time in the city in 2019, the mayor tried to ban it, and right-wing groups attacked the "Pride Hub" by throwing torches and breaking windows. In 2021, as COVID-19 was raging, activists organized an "Auto Pride" during which participants took to the streets in cars.

The Russian front lines were close to Kharkiv for many months during the first half of 2022, but Sphere began discussing ways to hold Pride as soon as Ukrainian forces pushed them back. Petlytsia said activists weighed a virtual Pride but felt strongly that the event needed some in-person component. But, in addition to safety concerns about marching when Russia was still lobbing bombs across Ukraine, Ukrainian martial law made it illegal to hold mass gatherings.

They decided they would hold a march of sorts in the subway, which had become a gathering spot through the long months that Kharkivites were using the stations as bomb shelters. They finessed the ban on mass gatherings by calling the event a

procession on the way to Pride, even though there was no bigger Pride event they were heading to. On September 24, around 100 people walked through the metro with Pride flags, dressed in traditional clothing, with the slogan "United as never before."<sup>73</sup>

Petlytsia said that: "We wanted to show that this is not just our LGBT+ identity, but that we are also Ukrainians."<sup>74</sup> Generally, Petlytsia said, they were well received by onlookers. However, some critics asked, "Why are you just helping women and LGBT people? Why are you not doing [more] for the military?" Petlytsia said. "We support everyone, but our priority is our fight for equality and rights."

In the war with Russia, she added, "It is not only Ukrainians who are fighting for their national identity. It's also the LGBT+ people who are fighting for our identity as well."<sup>75</sup>

**Photo:** LGBTIQ activists, undeterred by Russian shelling, enter the Kharkiv subway system for Metro Pride 2022. Photo by NGO WA Sphere.



# IV. Peru and the Multiplier Effect of Pride Marches

In 2002, a Pride March was organized for the first time in Peru. It was held in Lima and the most optimistic estimates point to an approximate participation of 1,500 people.<sup>76</sup> Twenty years later, official estimates indicate that the Lima March of 2022 had ten times more participation, with 15,000 people mobilized, the largest demonstration in the country that year. In addition, rallies were held in 25 other cities throughout the country.<sup>77</sup>

## Legal and Social Context

Peru is among the Latin America countries that has made the least legislative advances for LGBTIQ people's human rights.<sup>78</sup> The Congress of the Republic has been unable to pass an equal marriage law that was presented five years ago, and the Constitutional Court has issued three rulings refusing to recognize same-sex marriages of Peruvians legally married abroad.<sup>79</sup>

The lack of legal advances is partly explained by the political situation, where the main political parties in parliament – both left and right – are deeply conservative. This is compounded by polarization, political instability, and weak institutions, which prevents the possibility of debating issues related to human rights and

achieving long-term commitments.

Peru's lack of institutional commitment to LGBTIQ equality is reflected by two recent landmark judgments against it at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Both cases reached the Inter-American Human Rights system after plaintiffs were unable to obtain justice in national courts.



**Photo:** Sit-in by LGBTIQ groups in front of the Peruvian Congress in June 2019, days before the Lima Pride March. Photo by Martin Mejia/AP Photo.

In the case of *Azul Rojas Marín v. Peru*, the Inter-American Court found Peru responsible for torture and sexual violence against an LGBTI person by Peruvian police officers in 2008.<sup>80</sup> In *Olivera Fuente v. Peru*, the Peruvian State was found liable for discrimination against a same-sex couple in a commercial establishment in 2004.<sup>81</sup>

At the social level, homophobic and transphobic prejudices, rooted in a culture of toxic masculinity (“machismo”), remain a burden. In a survey conducted by Ipsos in 2020, 37 percent of respondents said they would not be willing to hire a trans person if they had a company, and 30 percent would not be willing to hire a homosexual person.<sup>82</sup> Also, 46 percent of respondents said that trans people live confused lives, 36 percent said it is dangerous to leave children in the care of a homosexual, and 19 percent opined that homosexuality is a disease.<sup>83</sup>

This legal and social context does not discourage LGBTIQ activists in Peru. On the contrary, every year, they are more organized and mobilized to fight for their rights, making the Pride marches not only a news event but also a social phenomenon.

## History

Predating the first Pride march in 2002, the oldest Pride celebration in the country on record was in June 1984. The Lima Homosexual Movement (MHOL) had been founded two years earlier as one of the oldest LGBTIQ organizations in Latin America and the oldest in Peru. In 1984, MHOL decided to celebrate Pride for the first time with a queer-themed play. The play was part of MHOL’s broader strategy to recruit new members and supporters through theater plays, which provided a space for queer people to socialize beyond the nightclubs.

Pride celebrations in Lima took place behind closed doors until 1995 when the first event was held in the city’s streets: a sit-in at Parque Kennedy in the cosmopolitan district of Miraflores. The selected location is one of the city’s main tourist areas and was a well-known early morning cruising destination in the 1980s and 1990s. Approximately 15 activists attended that first public demonstration. Archival photos of that event show the activists carrying signs with the following messages: “We are everywhere,” “No to discrimination,” “Dare to be,”

“Respect difference,” and “I am proud to be gay.”<sup>84</sup>

Finally, in 2002, MHOL organized Lima’s first march in the streets, with the support of Juan Carlos Ferrando, a pioneer of drag art in Peru and the son of a popular TV host. Gay activist Aldo Araujo, a leader of MHOL in those years, said Peruvian activists were inspired by growing Pride movements in other countries: “We saw that they were marching, they took to the streets, there were large numbers of people supporting them.”<sup>85</sup>

Here we see an important trend to highlight: the multiplier effect of Pride marches, which inspires and motivates others to follow suit and organize them in their respective cities. This trend will become evident when we see the multiplication of Pride marches in Peru. The question “And why not us?” is a question that has mobilized activists when deciding to celebrate Pride.

Initially, there was much discussion about whether it should be a Pride “march,” focused on the fact of exclusion and demand for the recognition of rights, or a Pride “parade,” given the need for visibility and queer joy. Finally, it was decided to call it a march, but since then it maintains the characteristics of both ideas. Maribel Reyes, a lesbian activist and one of the organizers of the march in recent years, sums it up: “The Pride March in Lima is a march that combines the political with the festive. It combines color with denunciation.”<sup>86</sup>

The slogan of the first march was “For a Constitution that Includes Us,” as Peru was discussing the possibility of having a new constitution at the time, and LGBTIQ activists wanted it to recognize non-discrimination based on sexual identity. In addition to MHOL, other LGBTIQ organizations, human rights and feminist organizations, gay nightclubs, and the general public participated. Jorge Alberto Chavez, one of the founders of Lima Pride, told Outright that “90 percent of those who were in the march were wearing masks, with their faces covered. Only a few had their faces uncovered.”<sup>87</sup> In the closing speech of the march, MHOL activists read a manifesto that pointed out: “It depends on us, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites, and transgenders, that this year, that tonight, we begin to be owners of our future.”<sup>88</sup>

MHOL organized the first three marches (2002, 2003,



and 2004). Independent LGBTIQ activists organized the fourth march, and finally, in 2005, the collective Marcha del Orgullo was formed and is responsible for organizing Pride to date.<sup>89</sup>

## Organization and Multiplier Effect of Pride

Jorge Apolaya, one of the current leaders of the Collective Lima Pride March, explains that the collective is not a traditional association or organization. Apolaya defines it as “a self-convened space” open to the participation of activists and other people who wish to participate each year. He explains how this works: “The Pride March Collective is made up of individuals but also of representatives of organizations that come together from the first call that is made public (each year), so that anyone who wants to join in organizing the Pride March can be part of this first assembly.”<sup>90</sup> Each city in Peru organizes its Pride march independently and according to its own criteria. The organization of the marches is not supported by any level of government, neither financially nor operationally. However, the police provide guarantees, as they do with any social demonstration that takes place in Peruvian cities.

Just as Pride marches in other parts of the Americas and

Europe were crucial for the Lima Pride March, the same effect was generated within the country and the trend continues to this day. Activist Aldo Araujo comments: “The first march made many people say, ‘in Lima, they are marching, so I am also going to march.’”<sup>91</sup> Following the Lima march, the Iquitos Pride March – the second oldest and now second largest pride march in Peru, known as “La regia marcha” (the fabulous march) – came up. Clauco Velasquez, an organizer of the Iquitos march and leader of Comunidad Homosexual Esperanza Región Loreto (CHERL), recalled that Lima had a powerful activist presence in the rest of the country and that the visibility achieved by the Lima march encouraged activists in Iquitos to organize their own.<sup>92</sup>

Bruno Montenegro, a transmasculine activist and one of the organizers of the Arequipa Pride March, told Outright that he used to watch the marches in Lima through videos and always thought that the marches in Arequipa should be like that:

That’s where the marches started, and they have the biggest march in the country. So, we would also like to have a march like that, wouldn’t we? Even though our population is smaller, and I think that could also motivate us not to travel to Lima, I would rather march in my city. I believe that each region wants its own march, with its own context, with its own people.<sup>93</sup>

Jorge Apolaya recognizes this impact:

One of the positive things we have achieved is that the whole country, from places that you could not even imagine that there could be a Pride march, join this in a playful way. I think that visibility helped a lot to achieve this. Twenty years ago, when I entered at the age of 17, we never imagined that other cities would have such important marches.<sup>94</sup>

As time went by, the inspiration no longer came only from Lima but from other cities with Pride marches. Last year, the first march was held in Abancay, Apurimac, a conservative, traditional town in the Peruvian Andes. Outright spoke with Naysha

**Photo:** Lima Pride March, 25 June 2022.  
Photo by Colectivo Marcha del Orgullo.



Huamanñahui, from the Kaypy Kany organization, one of the organizers of the march, on the inspiration to organize Pride for the first time. She said: “We have participated in different marches in Lima and Cusco more than anything else, and it’s like, ‘but why not in my city?’”<sup>95</sup>

There is no national federation that brings together the organizers or formal coordination spaces. Still, according to Maribel Reyes, there is an exchange of experiences, especially with those who dare to organize a Pride march for the first time. In this respect, Solange Soto, another organizer of the first Pride march in Abancay in 2022, told Outright:

Activists in Cusco gave us the guidelines to get permits, organize the demonstration, make the map for the mobilization, and so on. Even Lima was part of this because I remember that a colleague who had traveled from Abancay to Lima helped us to be included in the map. In Lima, they were happy that we took the first step, and everyone gave us the best possible advice. None of this would have been feasible without them.<sup>96</sup>

## Twenty Years Later: Increase, Visibility and Acceptance

Within two decades of the first Pride March in Peru, there has been a multiplication of marches throughout the country. A map elaborated by the Lima Pride March Collective in 2022 shows that 26 cities organized Pride marches in 2022, with Abancay and Cajamarca having their first Pride marches.<sup>97</sup>

Presently, there is a significant increase in attendees in all the Pride marches across Peru. Brashelly Guerra, trans activist and organizer of the Iquitos March, told Outright that although there were concerns

about whether the march would even be held as the city recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, “what we saw is that it increased in the number of participants. Many young people began to show themselves, to be more visible.”<sup>98</sup> Bruno Montenegro told Outright that in Arequipa: “Before [2022], there were always about two, three blocks of marchers, but this time around, there were also more floats, more people. And what surprised me the most was to see so many young people there, as well as families – fathers with their children, mothers with their children, and so on.”<sup>99</sup>

Implementing Pride activities in multiple Peruvian cities is also an act of vulnerability and love as Solange Soto, one of the organizers of the first march in Abancay expresses:

I actively participated in this march mainly for the memory of my father. He died before the march took place, the year before. He always told me that he saw the marches in Lima, and asked me why they don’t do their march here, and I told him that someday maybe it will be done here.<sup>100</sup>

**Photo:** Iquitos Pride March, 28 June 2022. Photo by Comunidad Homosexual Esperanza Región Loreto-CHERL.



In addition to this, Pride has become an avenue to experience affection as a society and community:

As we pass by their homes, they come out of their balconies and begin to applaud, they begin to show affection, that makes us feel safer, more secure, and loved. Loved because many times the authorities do not pay attention to our demands and say no to what we fight for. Maybe our authorities do not pay attention, but society is already giving us that [safe] space.<sup>101</sup>

Bruno Montenegro said the validation that arises from Pride helps to “reaffirm my commitment to the fight for human rights.”

Because throughout the year we have been working, sometimes we receive cases of violence and discrimination. But it is precisely this day that reminds me or makes me react and I say to myself: ‘Bruno, you are doing all this for the people.’<sup>102</sup>

Another trend identified in Peru marches is the increased visibility and inclusion of diverse LGBTIQ groups. In the early years, there were more gay men and lesbian women participating, and to a lesser extent, trans women. Today, there is a greater presence of nonbinary, transgender, and gender nonconforming people; bisexual and pansexual people; asexual people; and intersex people.

Despite the homophobia and transphobia present in Peruvian society and the positions of the main political actors against the recognition of the rights of LGBTIQ people, none of the marches have faced great opposition or resistance. It is unusual to find counterdemonstrators. In this regard, Brashelly Guerra indicates:

There is a great acceptance, right? But there are still certain radical groups that try to divide and are sensationalist, religious people who stand on a corner and shout and scream and say they are going to hell and all this. But we don’t care about them; whether they come out five, ten, twenty, thirty, fifty or a hundred, they are not going to stop the LGTBIQ+ Pride march from becoming a reality.<sup>103</sup>

The different activists interviewed agree that the press generally plays a positive role in reporting on Pride marches. Maribel Reyes believes that this is one of the merits of the Pride march:

Although the march has not perhaps contributed to a legislative advance or suddenly to an exact public policy, because obviously there is no study that says such, I think it has contributed to improving the treatment of the issue in the media, among other things, of which we can suddenly go and think about. For example, I am glad that there are some journalists who already handle the term LGBT.<sup>104</sup>

This progress with the media has been through the work of LGBTIQ organizations. Clauco Velasquez points out that:

With respect to the press, here there is a learning process over the years. We have carried out sensitization and education projects for the media with respect to the issue of sexual diversity. The press has been correcting, learning to no longer say ‘homosexual’ to a trans woman... no longer ‘patito’ or ‘chivitos’ in a derogatory way. There is no longer a negative perception in their reporting, but rather a response of respect, a response of support.<sup>105</sup>

Between the first Lima Pride March of 2002 and that of 2022, so much change has occurred. Jorge Alberto Chávez, one of its creators, told Outright:

There is an infinitely larger number of people and people no longer cover their faces. Those who go dressed up or in characters do so because they want to, not because they don’t want others to know. Now it is much more similar to the marches in other big cities. You see a photo, the boys, the strippers, the drag queens, all that and you can mix a Lima march from 2022, 2019, 2018 and it could be the same as Sydney, Taiwan, London, or Rio de Janeiro. There is not much difference. If you put a photo from Lima 2002 next to the New York march, the difference would be huge.<sup>106</sup>

# V. Namibia: Pride Changes Perspectives

## Legal and Social Context of LGBTIQ Rights

In Namibia, the common law inherited through British colonialism criminalizes same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults, although there are rarely, if ever, prosecutions under this law.<sup>107</sup> The latest Afrobarometer survey (2019–2021), a survey which investigates public perception on homosexuality, political opinion and religion, among other social issues, ranked Namibia as the “third-most-tolerant of homosexuality” in Africa, behind Cabo Verde and South Africa.<sup>108</sup> LGBTIQ organizing and advocacy in Namibia can be traced back to 1994, according to Linda Baumann, a leading human rights, feminist, and LGBTQ rights activist in Namibia.<sup>109</sup> Notwithstanding, discrimination against sexual and gender minorities persists in Namibia, and LGBTIQ people are denied protection from discrimination under the law.<sup>110</sup> In an early step backwards, in 2007, Namibia’s parliament amended the Labour Act of 1992 to remove protections on grounds of sexual orientation.<sup>111</sup>

There is no shortage of political demands by LGBTIQ Namibians, which are articulated through Pride and other LGBTIQ visibility events. Perhaps foremost on the list is the quest for decriminalizing sodomy in the country. Activist Friedel Dausab told Outright that in Namibia, which only achieved its independence in 1990, the

aftermath of political liberation showed “that we would not be free from discrimination based on gender, skin color, class, and sexual orientation. We thought independence meant freedom for everyone, but it excluded LGBTQ-identifying people.”<sup>112</sup> Challenging this exclusion, Dausab brought a case against Namibia’s sodomy laws before the High Court, which is currently pending.<sup>113</sup>

In 2021, with Pride as an entry point, South African activists joined the Namibia Equal Rights Movement to meet with the Namibian Law Reform Commission at the



Photo: LGBTIQ people and activists at the Pride Parade in Windhoek, Namibia, December 2021. Photo by Namibia Equal Rights Movement.

Ministry of Justice to lobby for the repeal of the sodomy law and other discriminatory legislation that impacts LGBTIQ Namibians.<sup>114</sup> The LGBTIQ rights movement in the country also strives for state recognition of salient rights in other respects.<sup>115</sup> For instance, gay couple Philip Lühl and Guillermo Delgado are seeking citizenship rights in the High Court for their twin children Paula and Maya, following the refusal of the state to issue travel documents for their entry into Namibia.<sup>116</sup> In a May 2023 victory, the Supreme Court of Namibia decided that marriages between same-sex couples conducted abroad should be recognized within the country.<sup>117</sup>

Activists first publicly celebrated Pride in Namibia in 2013 in the country's capital, Windhoek.<sup>118</sup> It acknowledged the full existence of queer Namibians and recognized victims of gender-based violence in the country.<sup>119</sup> Following this, Pride was held in Swakopmund, another Namibian city, for the first time in 2016.<sup>120</sup> The expansion and diversification of Pride also brought about the first lesbian festival in Windhoek in 2018, centering the

experiences and visibility of lesbians in the country.<sup>121</sup>

Since then, Pride, which takes place during the internationally commemorated 16 days of activism against gender-based violence every December, has continued to grow by the numbers and in societal acceptability. Pride in 2021 saw the largest physical gathering, with about 500 LGBTIQ people, activists and allies participating in a march alongside events such as a feminist festival, sunset yoga in the park, a quiz night, a film screening, an exhibition, and a drag night.<sup>122</sup> For the first time in 2021, Namibian LGBTIQ activists created a historic landmark, painting the second public rainbow sidewalk in Africa.<sup>123</sup>

## “United We Stand:” Pride in Namibia 2022

In 2022, a group of LGBTIQ rights activists and organizations decided to ensure that Pride “unites the community from capital to coast.”<sup>124</sup> Omar van Reenan of Equal Rights Movement Namibia described the objectives of Pride:

To illuminate the human rights issues faced by LGBTIQ+ persons to local communities; [...] provide a safe space for our community and allies; to gain awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity; to educate communities of important health precautions and their right to healthcare; to celebrate queer art and expression; to create awareness of the continued struggle for civil rights and liberation; to commemorate queer individuals who work to eradicate discrimination and promote the community's human rights. It is about creating visibility for our community and celebrating the need to have pride in our visibility, as visibility is our greatest tool to build and be united in community against homo-bi-transphobia.<sup>125</sup>

Pride activities included a march, a queer art exhibition in partnership with a feminist organization, comedy show, drag night, a roadshow involving a dance group to promote destigmatization of HIV/AIDS during the Worlds Aids Day campaign, a book reading by American nonbinary writer and performer Alok Vaid-Menon, and a theatre performance and workshop discussing the state



Photo: Pride Parade in Windhoek, Namibia, December 2021. Photo by Namibia Equal Rights Movement.

of LGBTIQ rights in the country through lenses such as decolonization.<sup>126</sup> Organizers also held the first “Spectrum” awards to honor LGBTQ creatives and activists.<sup>127</sup> In a public show of support, the United Nations House in Windhoek, Namibia also hoisted the LGBTIQ flag for the first time ever “to demonstrate the UN’s commitment to creating ‘safe spaces,’ free of stigmatization and discrimination.”<sup>128</sup>

In addition to these activities comprising the “big Pride in Windhoek,” activists also held Pride in Kunene, a rural area; an intersectional sex workers’ Pride event in Swakopmund, the coastal region; and performances and film screenings in Walvis Bay.<sup>129</sup> Understanding that LGBTIQ Namibians across the country deserve recognition and acceptance, activists aim to “bring Pride to all corners of Namibia, including the smaller towns where the queer community needs it the most.”<sup>130</sup>

Nonetheless, there are challenges experienced by LGBTIQ people celebrating Pride. For one, the visibility impact is limited. According to Baumann:

Our Prides are not creating visibility through all the different media like local radio and TV, which many Namibians rely on for accessing information. The current generation uses the internet and social media to create visibility around Pride – which many others cannot access.<sup>131</sup>

Baumann added that there was little or no coverage of Pride events in Black media.<sup>132</sup> According to Teddy, a Black transmasculine Namibian activist who participated in Pride in 2021, “Pride is now around racial lines – Blacks and whites. There were only three Blacks at the Pride in 2021. This means erasure of all the work that has previously been done to ensure racial integration in Namibia’s LGBTIQ movements.”<sup>133</sup>

As in many other cases, Pride organizers face financial constraints in striving to meet their objectives. Omar van Reenen of Equal Namibia told Outright that:

While we’ve been holding Pride for two years now, it’s all volunteer work. It takes a big sacrifice to do the work. We’ve gotten more support from businesses but it’s not enough to pay volunteers, book drag queens and make sure they get paid. The main issue with Pride is funding.<sup>134</sup>

The issue may equally lie with the fact that, according to activists, some funders do not view Pride as a critical part of advocacy. Friedel Dausab explained to Outright that “There’s almost always no money for Pride because people are seeing it as a vanity thing.”<sup>135</sup> Inadequate funding for Pride events invariably impacts on participation and accessibility. As Jholerina Timbo told Outright:

Funding also plays a major role in terms of inclusion. Ensuring participation of LGBTIQ people across the country for Pride events is extremely difficult. It is difficult to mobilize everyone to showcase the sheer massive number of LGBTIQ people in Namibia, for example. Not everyone can show up. I don’t see a lot of faces during our Pride events because of financial constraints. This is also one of the key factors that makes or breaks Pride events. When you march with only seven, twenty, or fifty people, people assume that



Photo: Pride Parade in Windhoek, Namibia, December 2021. Photo by Namibia Equal Rights Movement.

this is all of the community in the country. Meanwhile we have so many that would want to travel over but cannot, even allies.<sup>136</sup>

## Shaping Public Perception Through Pride

The Namibian activists Outright spoke with for this research expressed their belief in the power of Pride in shaping public perception for good. For instance, Jholerina Timbo explained that there has been an increase in the defense against homophobic vitriol particularly on social media, as a result of awareness and visibility initiatives such as Pride. She stated:

As someone who has been active in the movement since 2003, when I look to social media, I see a great shift in the conversations that happen. Back in the day, we were the ones defending ourselves against homophobic rhetoric in the media. But gradually, now, there are a lot of allies actively defending our causes. The visibility, awareness and engagements have shifted people's perceptions on who we are. Pride is one of the biggest contributors to change in perceptions and mindsets because this is when a lot of people can engage our communities in the streets, to ask questions.<sup>137</sup>

Baumann said that Pride has been impactful in creating necessary dialogue across movements, including intergenerational dialogue. According to Baumann:

[Pride] remains the tool that brings direct awareness and visibility – irrespective of politics. The Pride in Namibia has always been significant for remembering our struggle and also taking pride of our nationality. A country that allows us to do the Pride means there is a level of tolerance in society and government. Pride also helps to create even more tolerance. By participating in Pride, ordinary Namibians are associated with us in public this has created dialogue and that's how we have been able to be part of the national human rights sector. It has allowed us to integrate into national conversations and work together with other movements.<sup>138</sup>

Omar van Reenen, a nonbinary activist who founded Equal Rights Movement Namibia, believes that this is a

crucial time for LGBTIQ rights in the country to the extent that:

The goal of Pride events in Namibia is really to send a message that we're queer, we're here, we belong and are born free in Namibia. Most importantly, it's to bring people out of the shadows and out of the margins of society, to celebrate our queer Namibian culture and to really take up space.<sup>139</sup>

In addition, given the significance of cases seeking the promotion of LGBTIQ people's rights in Namibian courts, Pride helps to "[show] the government that we – as a collective – do not agree with state-sanctioned homophobic policies."<sup>140</sup>

Friedel Dausab believes that "Pride is doing exactly what it's meant to do by creating visibility for the movement."<sup>141</sup> In addition:

Pride and the visibility that it creates help in breaking the stereotypes and myths about LGBTIQ people, letting people know that we are human. It helps in restating that everyone needs to be treated with dignity to fulfill the promise of the Namibian Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that we are people born equal in dignity and rights. It also helps to challenge the myths that being gay is un-African or un-Christian. When I walk on the streets, I also walk as a Christian, as an African. That one action demystifies and breaks through stereotypes.<sup>142</sup>

Pride also helps in shaping generational perspectives and may prevent trauma. Omar van Reenen wishes for younger queer Namibians to know their value and that they are not alone:

If I saw Pride parades happening when I was in school and younger, it would have done so much for me. It would have given me so much more validation. It would have probably changed the trajectory of my young adulthood life.<sup>143</sup>

# VI. All Grown Up: Pride in Taiwan Hits 20 Years

## Legal and Social Context

Taiwan is a regional leader in Asia on LGBTQ rights, particularly since the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2019.<sup>144</sup> Most recently, Taiwan’s parliament gave a nod to equal rights by adopting a law allowing joint child adoption by same-sex couples.<sup>145</sup>

## History of Pride in Taiwan

Pride marches have taken place in Taiwan since 2003. The first Pride celebration in Taiwan’s capital, Taipei, “was a short walk, about 800 meters,” recalled activist Yi-Ling Lin of the Taiwan Rainbow Civil Action Association, a main organizer of Taiwan LGBT+ Pride. “We could finish it in 15 minutes. It was small but it was something.”<sup>146</sup>

In the first 10 years of Pride in Taiwan, accessing necessary funding was incredibly challenging.<sup>147</sup> Yi-Ling recalled that:

We sought out sponsors, but at the time, most people did not want to be associated with LGBTIQ issues as they felt it would damage their reputations. We had to get loans to carry out activities for Pride, which we would pay back after getting some income from the events. We never thought we would get to the 20th anniversary of Pride in Taiwan at that time. Every year we would deliberate on

whether we should have Pride – do we have money? How can we get money? Every year was like this.<sup>148</sup>

Activists also realized that sponsorships and funding can be attached to limitations, especially in terms of social justice activism. During the first Pride celebrations in 2003, Taipei City government provided some funding for Pride, resulting in criticism from some activists. As a result, “The next year, we decided not to take funding from the government so we could avoid any form of them controlling the course of Pride and our advocacy.”<sup>149</sup>



Photo: Taiwan Trans March 28 October 2022, Photo by Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association.



Eventually, with the resilience of Pride organizers and LGBTIQ people in continuing Pride, “we began to have more people participating in Pride and joining the movement. We got more sponsors. Taiwan Pride is getting bigger.”<sup>150</sup> Now, in addition to Taipei Pride, certain cities also run annual Pride events, including Taichung Pride, Tainan Pride, and Kaoshiung Pride.<sup>151</sup>

In 2019, activists initiated a Trans March that started in 2019, “which has become an important part of the LGBTQ Pride Parade in Taipei.”<sup>152</sup> During the 2022 Pride events, 3,000 people reportedly participated in the Trans March.<sup>153</sup>

## Pride Turns 20

In October 2022, the country held its 20th annual Pride Parade, with about 120,000 people attending in Taipei.<sup>154</sup> In 20 years, Pride in Taiwan has grown tremendously, evidence of the progress made in shifting social perception from wariness to majority acceptance and of policy and legal advancements in the country. In addition, “Pride has allowed us to open more spaces for LGBT people, creating more allies and influencing people within the country and continent.”<sup>155</sup> As Pride has continued:

We have seen more people caring about our events – from parents and friends to the general community. This spurs the government and political leaders to do more in support of LGBTIQ rights. After same-sex marriage was legalized in 2019, more and more people have kept showing up for us and our events. More people are willing to show themselves, and the government knows that – so our issues are viewed as important.<sup>156</sup>

Recognizing how far the movement has progressed while conscious of still more rights to attain, organizers themed the 20th Pride “An Unlimited Future” from the perspective of deconstructing gender and sexuality and using this to spur dialogue about “the future of LGBT rights in Taiwan, with a particular focus on groups that are often underrepresented.”<sup>157</sup>

In its 20th year, Pride in Taiwan included workshops on legalizing transnational marriages and legal gender recognition for trans and gender-diverse persons.<sup>158</sup> It



Photo Left & Right: Taiwan Trans March 28 October 2022. Photo by Taiwan Tongzhi (LGBTQ+) Hotline Association.

also incorporated a 20th-anniversary retrospective exhibition titled “Walk with Pride,” a Rainbow Sightseeing Bus Tour hosted by drag queens to bring visitors to prominent LGBT sites in the city, a stage show, and a “rainbow market” with product sales.<sup>159</sup>

With the constant evolution of the Taiwanese LGBTIQ movement, the goal of Pride has been structured to achieve the most results for LGBTIQ people and marginalized communities. In the beginning, there was a lot of misinformation and disinformation about LGBTIQ issues in Taiwan.<sup>160</sup>

Yi-Ling Lin of the Taiwan Rainbow Civil Action Association explains that through Pride in 2022, “we let people know that we’ve walked on the streets for 20 years and everyone is free to join us.”<sup>161</sup> According to Lin, there has been a gradual shift within society due to the visibility of Pride and the awareness and information spread through Pride:

In the first years of Pride, people would look at us and think that maybe we’re weird, but the situation has really improved now. Now, they start to see that we are just normal people, looking for opportunities to express our voices and not causing any trouble. The public went from avoiding us to helping us. It has been a period of slow change. Now, people reach out to us to ask about our proposals if they haven’t heard from us.<sup>162</sup>

## Pride Beyond Borders

In 2022, Pride marchers in Taiwan raised placards about “global political issues” including “Hong Kong independence banners and Ukrainian flags.”<sup>163</sup>

Taiwanese LGBTIQ human rights activists wish to mirror progress made with Pride and LGBTIQ rights and visibility events in neighboring Asian countries through collaboration. Yi-Ling Lin told Outright that:

This year [2023], we will go to Korea [for Pride]. I heard that their Pride last year was intense, with demonstrations from religious anti-LGBTIQ rights groups. We will be there to support the LGBTIQ people in the country.<sup>164</sup>

Noting the progress made within the country, particularly in comparison with neighboring countries, LGBTIQ activists

in Taiwan seek to “have stronger connections with Pride events around Asia.”<sup>165</sup> While the goal is to share lessons learned and best practices, “we hope to invite [LGBTIQ people in other Asian countries] to our Pride as well because it is important for people in Taiwan to know that there are more of us LGBTIQ people out there.”<sup>166</sup>

## First Person: Outright’s Asia Director Jennifer Lu Reflects on Taiwan Pride

Outright’s Asia Director, Jennifer Lu, has been involved with Taipei Pride since its beginnings. Outright’s Global Researcher, Ohotuowo Ogbeche, spoke to Lu about the history and meaning of Pride:

In the first year, I think there were around 800 to 1,000 participants, which was shocking for us because we thought there would only be about 50–100 people. But from the very beginning, you could see the interest of the community. We had masks ready for anyone who wanted to conceal their identity, but most people covered themselves creatively or didn’t use masks.<sup>167</sup>

At this time, “mainstream media hardly reported LGBTQ issues, except negative news which fostered stigma and discrimination.”<sup>168</sup> Hence, one of the strategies of the movement was to create awareness and visibility on the lived experiences and correct narratives “while educating mainstream society and media.”<sup>169</sup> Achieving significant successes through these efforts led to strategies around “advocating for policy change and expanding the recognition of the rights of LGBTQ people in the country around 2010.”<sup>170</sup> Lu adds that:

By 2014–2016, marriage equality became a priority campaign and topic in society. During those years, Pride became an opportunity for the LGBTQ community to show our impact, in pushing politicians to listen to us. Pride also provided a platform for friendly politicians and corporations to show their support, which we adopted in asking them to do more.<sup>171</sup>

In fact, “Pride in Taiwan has now become one of the biggest events not only within LGBTQ communities but in the whole society. People are getting used to Pride because it happens every year. Social perception changed especially after marriage equality was granted.”<sup>172</sup>

Photo: Jennifer Lu at the Taiwan Equality March after same-sex marriage was legalized, May 2017.

While Pride can be commercialized and politicized, it is important that the communities continue to strive to center LGBTQ people’s rights and needs.<sup>173</sup> As a result, Lu said:

Pride in Taiwan is still very special, with a lot of meaning. The organizers always make sure to center the community and civil society, even if there are corporate sponsors. At the Pride final stage, we always invite activists from other social movements in our society to publicly share their ideas and educate everyone. We ensure a balance of LGBTQ groups as well for all the speakers at the final stage.<sup>174</sup>

Pride remains a means of forming relationships in a safe way for LGBTQ people: “For many, many people, Pride is the beginning of finding community and also kickstarting their activism.”<sup>175</sup>



# VII. Türkiye Pride Marches: We Keep Coming Back

## Legal and Social Context

In the Republic of Türkiye, same-sex sexual conduct between consenting adults is not outlawed. However, government leaders have spurred an increasingly hostile environment. The head of the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs stated in April 2020 that homosexuality causes HIV and “brings illnesses and corrupts generations.”<sup>176</sup> These remarks triggered a series of anti-LGBTIQ campaigns. Freedom of assembly for LGBTIQ people is under attack, while religiously motivated homophobia and transphobia manifested in multiple demonstrations in 2022 calling for bans on so-called LGBTIQ propaganda. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan publicly inflames anti-LGBTIQ sentiment.<sup>177</sup> Ahead of a run-off election in May 2023, Erdoğan asked “young people to ‘not oppose marriage’ and to ‘not look at these LGBTs,’” claiming that the “People’s Alliance is walking on the path of the holy family.”<sup>178</sup>

## Escalating Crackdowns

The first attempt a Pride March in Türkiye was in 1993. The state restricted and detained LGBTIQ people intending to march,

after which organizers did not attempt a Pride March for another 10 years.<sup>179</sup> The 2003 Pride march in Istanbul saw about 50 people. This number had risen to “hundreds of thousands of people” by 2013. The last marches in Istanbul before Pride became targeted by heavy-handed state crackdowns were a Pride March in 2014 and a Trans Pride March on 22 June 2015. A week after the successful Trans Pride March, however, the police prohibited



**Photo:** Clash with riot police officers during the 10th Izmir LGBTIQ+ Pride March in Izmir, Turkey, on Sunday, 26 June 2022. Photo by Berkcan Zengin via Getty Image.

the larger Pride March, scheduled for 28 June, on the grounds that such marches should not take place during Ramadan due to “sensitivities.” They forcibly dispersed protestors with water cannons and tear gas.<sup>180</sup>

Thus began a new normal in Türkiye: from 2015 to 2022, there have been continued bans against Pride marches in multiple cities and systematic attacks by law enforcement against demonstrators, including detentions.<sup>181</sup> In 2016, Istanbul Governorate banned the 7th Trans Pride March, a perverse response to a series of threats and hate speech against LGBTIQ people by a nationalist group called Alperen Ocklari.<sup>182</sup> Police arrested participants who showed up to march, later releasing them without charge.<sup>183</sup>

State officials have also shut down LGBTIQ students’ university clubs and restricted activities of LGBTIQ organizations.<sup>184</sup> Olcay G., an LGBTIQ advocate with the 17 Mayıs Derneği (17 May Association), said that “the human rights space has been shrinking due to increasingly authoritarian and oppressive acts by the government against civil society organizations.”<sup>185</sup> In addition, ordinary LGBTIQ people have “been systematically targeted with hate speech by mainstream media and high-level bureaucrats and politicians... triggering hate crimes.”<sup>186</sup>

In 2017, the Pride march was banned on the basis that

the areas where it was set out to be held were not within “the meeting and demonstration [areas for] marches” allowed by the state.<sup>187</sup> Police arrested 27 participants, then released them without charge.<sup>188</sup> Pride in Istanbul in 2018, slated for after Ramadan, was also interrupted by the police, who used rubber bullets, pepper spray and detained five people.<sup>189</sup> The Pride Committee’s application to hold the 2019 Istanbul Pride March was rejected due to reasons that “no demonstration is allowed” in the city.<sup>190</sup> During this period in 2019, Queer Olympix, “Türkiye’s first queer sport event,” was banned by the Kadıköy District for reasons of preventing “provocations that may occur due to social sensitivities, public order, prevention of crime, protection of public health and public morality.”<sup>191</sup>

Pride events in 2020 were mostly carried out online at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, but activists report that the police threatened to detain a group of people gathered on a street, listening to music, on the evening of the online Pride celebration.<sup>192</sup> Police also used tear gas and physically attacked and detained marchers during the Istanbul parade in 2021, after failing to grant a permit for the parade despite the state having lifted COVID-19 restrictions on movement.<sup>193</sup> The Istanbul Governor’s Office rejected the application for the main downtown march on the grounds that “provocative actions and incidents may occur within our provincial borders,” claiming the prohibition on Pride was “in order to protect the peace and security of the public, including those who will participate in the open-air meeting.” The Governor’s Office also cited “public health and public morality, the rights and freedoms of others,” the need to “prevent possible violence and terrorist incidents, and to prevent provocative actions and incidents.”<sup>194</sup> In the

Beyoğlu District of Istanbul, Pride was also banned, to “protect the rights and freedoms of others and to prevent the commission of crime.”<sup>195</sup> The Şişli District Governorate banned a Pride picnic in Maçka Park and violently dispersed and attacked picnickers.<sup>196</sup>

In 2022, the police once again violently cracked down on Pride, beating marchers and arresting hundreds of people, including

**Photot:** Two women take part in an anti-LGBT rally organized by pro-Islamic organizations in Istanbul on 18 September 2022. Photo by YASIN AKGUL/ Getty Images.



journalists – what Human Rights Watch described as “a tidal wave in what were already very treacherous waters for LGBT people in Türkiye.”<sup>197</sup> LGBTIQ activists in Türkiye reported that the government banned 10 events and arrested 530 LGBTIQ people and rights defenders within 37 days.<sup>198</sup>

Umut Rojda Yıldırım, a lawyer and LGBTIQ rights activist in Türkiye, said that in Istanbul, “the number of detainees was so high that the whole procedure was about 24 hours long. I was on the ground, in the streets, and at the police station also to give detainees some legal advice to be there when they were giving their testimonies to the police.”<sup>199</sup>

Beha Yıldız, a trans nonbinary activist who has been detailed at least twice for participating in Pride, including in 2022, said that even after being hospitalized, discriminatory treatment continued. The doctor who was supposed to check Yıldız and certify that they were fit, without injuries, challenged the process because “he is Islamist. He refused to look at me. It took me hours and hours to get out of the hospital.”<sup>200</sup>

## The Way Forward Is Resilience

Amid these crackdowns, LGBTIQ people in Türkiye remain resilient, defying the repression of their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. In 2016, after the state banned the 14th Istanbul Pride March, purportedly because it was scheduled during Ramadan, the Pride Week Committee announced the “We Are Dispersing” theme, urging everyone to disperse to every corner.<sup>201</sup> Nineteen people were detained for violating the law on demonstrations.<sup>202</sup>

Nalan Turgutlu is one of the organizers of Pride in Mersin, a southern coastal city in Türkiye, where the very first celebration took place in 2015. For this community, it was important to organize Pride to keep the community politically engaged and allow neighboring cities to witness Pride.<sup>203</sup> While Pride has been subjected to yearly bans in Istanbul and Ankara, in Mersin, “the first time we got banned was in 2022.”<sup>204</sup> According to Turgutlu:

Although over the years the climate has gotten harsher and harsher, last year was the very first time we got outrightly banned. The police told us directly that we are not allowed by the governor, that the governor has banned us from celebrating anything. Previously, they [the police] would make excuses about not being able to provide security for our Pride events but last year, they said, ‘No, these events are forbidden.’<sup>205</sup>

Turgutlu explains that the governor prohibited every element of Mersin’s proposed week-long activities for Pride, “sentence by sentence.”<sup>206</sup> The community has a queer football team and has used the same pitch for eight years; however, in 2022, “the pitch owner called me and told me that they are restructuring and we cannot play there. I asked him ‘Did the police call you?’ And he said ‘yes.’ Then he said, ‘I don’t get it. Why are they not allowed to play football?’”<sup>207</sup> LGBTIQ activists were also denied the use of billboards, which was a first because “we pay for the billboards and it’s a private company who runs it. But we were banned from using them.”<sup>208</sup>

In the end, Turgutlu and her team had to find ways to implement their activities “but not openly in public. Just with feminist activists and queer people.”<sup>209</sup>

**Photo:** Clash during the 10th Izmir LGBTI+ Pride March in Izmir, Turkey, 26 June 2022. Photo by Berkcan Zengin/Getty Images.



As Pride month 2023 approaches, LGBTIQ activists in Türkiye plan to “be in the streets anyway” even as they do not know which way their governance will turn, given the ongoing Presidential elections.<sup>210</sup> From Turgultu’s perspective, the climate may be getting worse:

On the other side it’s getting stronger because people are holding up more, together. In cases like this, the community finds ways to be flexible. One year, we swam with the [rainbow] flags because the bans did not emphasize that we must not swim. Another time, we wore the flags in T-shirt form not holding flags such that anyone who looked at us would know we’re queer but there’s no material evidence to hold on to. We will find ways to stay afloat.<sup>211</sup>

The trend, as Yıldırım explains, is for the state to ban the marches on the day of the march, “so you don’t have any time to appeal the decision.”<sup>212</sup> As Erdoğan, Türkiye’s President, begins his third term, activists remain unsure whether the 2023 Pride marches will be banned or not. One thing they remain certain of, said Umut Yıldırım, is that “No matter what, Pride March will happen. And this year we are going to have Trans Pride as well.”<sup>213</sup>

Beha Yildiz, the trans nonbinary activist who was detained twice for participating in Pride, told Outright that Turkish LGBTIQ people’s resilience stems from “being already at the very edge of life” due to the myriad of challenges plaguing civil society and the enjoyment of basic human rights in the country.<sup>214</sup> As Yildiz states:

Pride is very important for the queer community. It has shifted from the concept of celebration to resistance and actually surviving because the conditions are really, really hard for the queer community. Every queer person, including me, is looking for mental support mechanisms because we are tired, because of this huge load on our shoulders that we have to carry every day. We are seeking ways to live more beautifully and we’re also trying to enlarge our solidarity and resistance. This makes Pride very important in this regard.<sup>215</sup>

# VIII. Pride in Malta: The Government and the People

## Background and Context

Malta has one of the best LGBTIQ human rights records in the world. Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2017, the year after the enactment of regulations outlawing forms of conversion practices.<sup>216</sup> The Maltese Constitution also protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>217</sup> The Equality for Men and Women Act, amended in 2014, also prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics in various spheres.<sup>218</sup> Malta has been at the forefront of legal progress aimed at protecting the rights of transgender and intersex people, including through adopting rights-based legal gender recognition and prohibiting genital mutilation and medical interventions of intersex children without their informed consent.<sup>219</sup> According to a 2019 Eurobarometer survey on social perception of LGBTIQ, 73 percent of Maltese agree that gay, lesbian, and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people.<sup>220</sup>

Progress in Malta stems from the assiduous work of activists. The Malta Gay Rights

Movement (MGRM) – now Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement – started the conversation and work on LGBTIQ rights advancement, with limited resources, in the early 2000s and held Malta’s first Pride in the capital city, Valletta, in 2004.<sup>221</sup> About 50 participants attended, “most of whom were straight allies and some politicians who supported equality.”<sup>222</sup> At the time, “there was mostly backlash and ridicule. But Pride continued year after year, with



**Photo:** People celebrate in Saint George’s Square after the Maltese parliament approved a civil unions bill in Valletta on 14 April 2014. Photo by Matthew Mirabelli/Getty Images.



organizations holding awareness campaigns and distributing educational materials.”<sup>223</sup>

An NGO called Drachma was established in 2008, focusing on LGBTIQ rights and faith.<sup>224</sup> Through Drachma, which “did a lot of work with clergy and the Catholic Church in Malta, and in holding discussions and creating awareness,” there was better humanization of LGBTIQ experiences from the faith perspective.<sup>225</sup> This laid a solid foundation to the extent that with a 2013 change of government, “civil liberties were priority on the agenda. From then onwards, there has been a commitment from a government point of view to support LGBTIQ rights.”<sup>226</sup>

Malta Pride grew significantly by the numbers in 2016, where about 1,000 people who were mostly LGBTIQ-identifying attended Pride.<sup>227</sup> By 2019, nearly 2 percent of Malta’s entire population (8,000) attended the Pride March events.<sup>228</sup>

Pride in the Republic of Malta is now primarily organized by Allied Rainbow Communities and usually occurs in September.<sup>229</sup> According to Allied Rainbow Communities, Pride in Malta is “an opportunity to raise visibility and awareness, educate, live our lives unapologetically and be a light for those living in fear.”<sup>230</sup>

The Maltese Government, through its Human Rights Directorate, provides political and financial backing for the organization of Pride.<sup>231</sup> Such a solid and obvious government presence represents the Maltese Government’s constructive relationship with civil society, and helps ensure two-way dialogue and “continuous support from the government in reaching the community’s objectives.”<sup>232</sup> According to Aaron Giardina, the government also exemplifies its commitment to provide visibility in supporting LGBTIQ rights locally and at the international level:

The government is taking a political stand to support LGBTIQ rights globally and in supporting Prides and the LGBTIQ movement beyond Pride. As a government, we also try to attend different Prides around the European Union, particularly EuroPride. We aim to be visible there, to support the community.”<sup>233</sup>

In addition, the SOGIGESC Unit organizes a human rights conference as part of Pride week, to present its work, objectives and challenges, and create space for community dialogue with LGBTIQ people.<sup>234</sup>

## The First Pride in Gozo

Outright spoke with Antonella Bugeja, a queer, gender fluid activist from Gozo, who is currently based on the island of Malta. While Gozo is a “sister island” of Malta in that it is one country, for Bugeja, they are really “two separate islands with two very different lifestyles.”<sup>235</sup> Gozo has a reputation for being socially conservative, with a small and aging population. A ferry is required to reach the mainland.

The organization that championed the first ever Pride on the island, LGBTI+ Gozo, was founded in 2015 to offer a safe space for young LGBTIQ people who remain in Gozo and cannot go to the island of Malta as they please.<sup>236</sup> The organization’s activities began with workshops, with the goal of eventually conducting a public Pride march. As on the mainland, the Maltese government has been supportive, supplying an office for

**Photot:** Participants at the first Pride March in Gozo, Malta. Photo by LGBTI+ Gozo.



LGBTI+ Gozo that serves as a center for free counseling services and a hub for social groups.<sup>237</sup>

With its first Pride march, LGBTI+ Gozo set out to achieve “visibility, representation and a stronger [LGBTIQ] voice on the island of Gozo.”<sup>238</sup> Having Pride in Gozo is seen as historic, a testament to the trend “of acceptance and inclusivity” for queer people on the islands, who have for long suffered discrimination.<sup>239</sup> As Bugeja described to Outright, the event, which saw the attendance of about 200 people, “was a very raw kind of march, portraying the originality of Pride as a protest and a safe haven for people.”<sup>240</sup> The Maltese Ministry for Gozo was instrumental in organizing a Pride concert for participants in Gozo.<sup>241</sup>

Since Malta is a comparatively small country, Bugeja said, people may have wondered as to why Gozo needed its own Pride. Antonella Bugeja explained that once it happened:

I instantly realized how much we needed [Pride]. It was really important because the Pride March in Gozo showed that we also have a voice; and that people who live in Gozo no longer need to cross a ferry to travel to Malta to get this sort of [safe, welcoming and inclusive] space, but can have it in Gozo as well. It was equally amazing to see people five years younger than I am, who we used to attend school together, marching at Pride together.<sup>242</sup>

Feedback from the conservative community was generally positive, Bugeja said. “We had so many people come to us... it was such an event full of love and community. I think it was an important steppingstone for the LGBTIQ community in Gozo.”<sup>243</sup> However, some negative responses were shared, especially online. In one case, a person stated on an online platform that “the attendees of the Gozo Pride March should be bombed.” He was ordered to pay a €3,000 fine and sentenced to a six-month suspended prison sentence for hate speech.<sup>244</sup>

Through the work of LGBTI+ Gozo and the Pride March, Bugeja activists are creating a safe, affirming and welcoming community “There are improvements – slowly,

but surely.”<sup>245</sup> Being from Gozo herself, witnessing Pride was “inner healing, and recognizing that we [LGBTIQ people] are taking up concrete space even while balancing religion.”<sup>246</sup> She adds:

Growing up as part of the LGBT community, you have to find ways to validate your existence, you have to fight to keep your place in the world sometimes. These things – like Pride – make you realize that your existence is valid, you are loved. There are so many people around you who have experienced the same things as you and it just makes you feel less alone. It makes you feel seen. I think it’s really healing for the kind of inner turmoil and the internalized homophobia.<sup>247</sup>

# IX. Pride in Jamaica: A Tale of Two Cities

## Legal and Social Context

Jamaica criminalizes same-sex acts between men under its Offences Against the Person Act, with punishment of up to 10 years imprisonment. The law has rarely been enforced in recent years.<sup>248</sup> Still, there is prevalent discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ people in Jamaica.<sup>249</sup> In one case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Commission found evidence of discrimination against LGBTQ people in Jamaica and recommended the decriminalization of consensual same-sex acts between adults.<sup>250</sup>

Despite the hostile climate for sexual and gender minorities, Jamaica LGBTIQ activists and organizations strive to advance the human rights of LGBTIQ people and bravely began celebrating Pride in 2015.

## PrideJa

Since 2015, the National Pride, PrideJa, takes place in Kingston during the week of “Emancipence,” the period when Jamaicans celebrate Emancipation Day on 1 August and Independence Day on 6 August.<sup>251</sup> According to Noelle Campbell, the Wellness Program Manager at the Jamaican Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), Pride in Kingston might have had a comparatively late start but it was a good start given the socio-legal climate in Jamaica:

It’s always been reported and documented that we’re very, very anti-LGBT. So I think we have to give a lot of credit to the fact that our first Pride was actually held, and subsequently, we’ve had one every year since then.<sup>252</sup>

PrideJa is a week full of activities ranging from sports festivals to a breakfast party, and multiple events where “we’re able to actually work with members of the community in hosting events.”<sup>253</sup>

## The Challenge of Inclusion and



Photo: Participants at the Pride Breakfast in Kingston, Jamaica, August 2022. Photo by J-FLAG.

## Acceptance

According to Elton Johnson of J-FLAG, also known as Equality for All Foundation, PrideJa has helped in achieving some of the movement's objectives, including in creating awareness and providing alternative narratives to the harmful narratives otherwise held by people in society. As he stated:

We were asking people to support a movement and a people they didn't know. No one had seen us outside of the caricatures and all kinds of narratives told about LGBT people. But, I think with Pride being so fun and interactive, this has allowed people to feel comfortable with each other, and let them share their stories with other people. Now people in society know LGBT people. Visibility leads to deeper engagement.<sup>254</sup>

For Campbell, inclusion is important in light of harsh socio-economic realities:

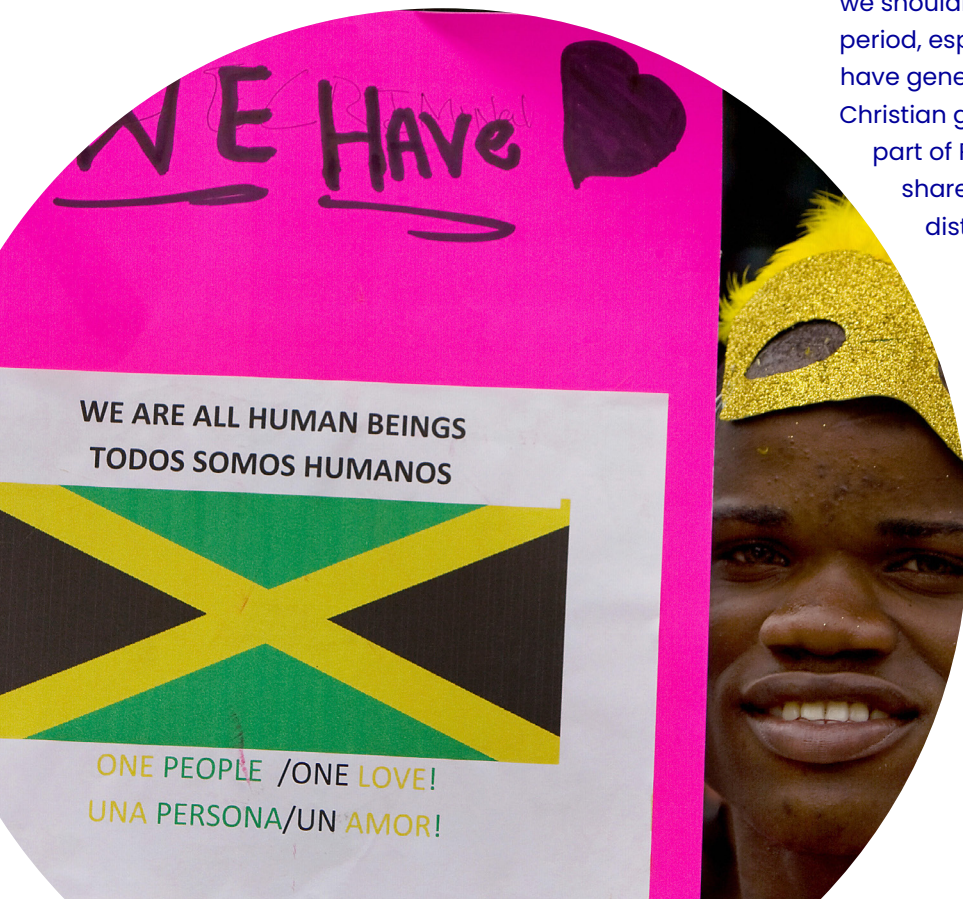
We recognize that Pride is a place where LGBTIQ people can fully be themselves in the face of challenges with housing, jobs and other socio-economic issues. This makes it important for us to host at least one free event. People can come and have a good time even if it's the one event that they come to.<sup>255</sup>

Given the climate, it can be challenging to get LGBTIQ people to attend Pride "if they are not ready to be out."<sup>256</sup> People can feel that attending a Pride event is outing themselves and that can be a barrier. Nonetheless, Pride in Kingston, Jamaica has achieved changes "in terms of visibility community involvement, community participation and allyship building."<sup>257</sup> Still, given the hostile climate, Campbell said, some corporate "allies"

may not be publicly associated with us but this still means that we get some sort of support and it helps to build networks. If you have one person in the organization, maybe in a couple of years, you'll actually have the organization being able to freely put their branding on your events. I think building allyship is incredibly touchy, but it's so important for the movement.<sup>258</sup>

Amid building allyship, backlash still exists and "anti-LGBTIQ people are very dedicated to their cause, especially religious groups. The homophobia we experience is deeply rooted in religion which affects other institutions including education and the media."<sup>259</sup>

The public reception to Pride, in the face of Jamaica's laws, political history, and religious leanings, is varied. Noting that Jamaicans celebrate Pride on National Independence Day, "there was the pushback to say that we shouldn't have Pride during the Emancipence period, especially when we first started. Now, views have generally mellowed."<sup>260</sup> Still, some conservative Christian groups in Kingston have religious events "as part of Pride. They are usually not violent although they share information about converting souls and they distribute souvenirs like bookmarks yearly."<sup>261</sup>



**Photo:** A Jamaican LGBTIQ activist takes part in the first international march against stigma, discrimination, and homophobia, in Mexico City, on 2 August 2008. Photo by ALFREDO ESTRELLA/Getty Images.

Generally, across Jamaica, activists seek to adopt:

a sustainability approach for Pride which includes more allyship building and community participation. As an organization [J-FLAG], we want to scale back the number of our activities and have community members champion the rest of the events to include a wider array of the Jamaican population.<sup>262</sup>

For Johnson, “there is more value in making Pride a community and collective affair,” and

[Across Jamaica], we now have “Pride Share” where individuals apply for funding or other assistance like logistic support or guidance, to enable them host Pride activities. This has been very good. More actors are willing to work to make Pride bigger and more inclusive.<sup>263</sup>

## “We Want to Have Our Own Flavor”: Montego Bay Pride

Kingston’s J-FLAG activists spoke of bridging the geographical divide by hosting events outside Kingston to enable people in different locations to access events during Pride.<sup>264</sup> But in some parts of Jamaica, public Pride events are unsafe or impossible. Montego Bay, on the eastern part of the island, held Pride events from 2015 through 2018. According to activist Robyn Stevenson, these events provide space “for LGBT people to safely be themselves publicly in a very visible way.”<sup>265</sup> Smaller than PrideJa held in Kingston, Montego Bay Pride provided an inspiring experience for participants, “seeing the collaboration between police officers along the way redirecting traffic, and Pride organizers. Although we would hear some homophobic comments by people observing, we were able to walk safely, without feeling threatened, dancing really freely.”<sup>266</sup>

In 2019, Montego Bay’s mayor refused to allow Pride participants to use a government agency’s building, the Montego Bay Cultural Center. Other venues followed suit, refusing to rent to organizers for Pride events.<sup>267</sup> Ultimately, organizers canceled Pride, stating in a press release: “The local police have advised that the hysteria whipped up against LGBT Jamaicans by the mayor and the councilor is so violent right now that the police can’t provide

security for our Walk for Rights without extraordinary measures and expense.”<sup>268</sup>

At this point, according to Stevenson, organizers in Montego Bay:

Are not as focused on visibility because we’re very conscious about safety. A lot of people cannot be out in their communities because of real threats to their security. And so, what we focus more on is creating a sense of community and solidarity so people can know there is a safe space for them to come to and fully be themselves.<sup>269</sup>

Other challenges that the LGBTIQ organization, Queertigo Bay, face include the inadequacy of finances and the difficulties in mobilizing people to attend LGBTIQ events due to their social contexts.<sup>270</sup> Another barrier is “the availability of venues that are willing to have us. We have to seek those spaces out, but they are few and far between.”<sup>271</sup>

All over Jamaica, LGBTIQ activists wish to have “self-sustaining community movements,” especially outside the capital city. Stevenson told Outright:

I would love Pride to be a thing that happens outside of Kingston, to expand the center of focus from just the urban region to everywhere else. We are everywhere, existing everywhere, and the culture is different everywhere. We want to have our own flavor to the activities.<sup>272</sup>

# X.“We Need to Occupy Everywhere:” Intersex Inclusion in Pride

As intersex persons, we are mostly the last people to hear about events. I would say that intersex persons are a minority within a minority group.<sup>273</sup>

In 2013, Morgan Carpenter, an intersex rights activist from Australia, designed the intersex flag.<sup>274</sup> Pursuing intersex visibility within LGBTIQ Pride, Valentino Vecchiotti incorporated the intersex flag in the Pride Progress flag in 2021.<sup>275</sup> The inclusion of the intersex flag on the rainbow flag is viewed by some as a “big step forward” for intersex people.<sup>276</sup> However, there is more to do to ensure equitable representation, visibility, and full inclusion of intersex people in LGBTIQ advocacy and flagship events, including Pride.

Outright spoke with four intersex rights activists on their perspectives and experiences on the inclusion and visibility of intersex people in LGBTIQ Prides. Obioma Chukwuike of Intersex Nigeria said that LGBTIQ Pride organizers do not fully consider the perspectives and rights of intersex people in designing Pride activities.<sup>277</sup> According to them:

Pride [usually] celebrates the visibility of sexual orientation and gender identity, and sex characteristics are not always

highlighted. I have not really seen the inclusion of intersex perspectives or design in celebrating Pride. We [intersex people] celebrate Pride from an outsider perspective. It is intersex people that then try to incorporate themselves into the celebrations.<sup>278</sup>

Chukwuike described, for example, having to push for the inclusion of the intersex flag in an Africa Pride event: “It



**Photo:** A person waves an intersex-inclusive Pride flag.

is common for you to forget it, but it shouldn't be. You should remember the intersex flag as often as you remember the other flags representing LGBTIQ persons."<sup>279</sup>

Jeff Cagandahan of Intersex Philippines told Outright that Metro Manila Pride in 2022 was the first time a group of intersex people participated visibly in Pride.<sup>280</sup> He said, "We noticed that many LGBTQ people are not familiar with intersex people. They haven't heard of or know what 'intersex' is."<sup>281</sup> To address the information gap, Cagandahan said, "We started working with different LGBTQ organizations, conducting 'Intersex 101' so that community will know what intersex is."<sup>282</sup> According to Cagandahan, "the awareness raising efforts for the LGBTQ community started here."<sup>283</sup>

In Nepal, the Blue Diamond Society has been celebrating Pride since 2010, on the day of Gaijatra, a festival which celebrates people who died in the past year.<sup>284</sup> In 2019, Campaign for Change, the first and only intersex-led organization in Nepal, launched its own event with the intent of heightening visibility of intersex human rights issues.<sup>285</sup> At the 2019 event, activist Esan Regmi said, with limited resources, "we couldn't invite our intersex people from all over Nepal. But last year [2022], we came out with our flags with more than 25 intersex individuals participating in the national Pride."<sup>286</sup>

Pride can provide an opportunity for intersex visibility, Regmi of Nepal said, because:

Even within queer populations, many do not know about intersex people. When we participate with our intersex flag and slogans, people ask questions and we have a chance to explain. We also address myths and misconceptions about intersex bodies. Pride is an opportunity not only for visibility on the streets but for creating awareness about intersex population.<sup>287</sup>

Hiker Chiu, founder of Intersex Asia, stressed the importance of intersex participation in more Pride marches around the world: "We need to occupy everywhere."<sup>288</sup>

## Barriers Preventing Intersex Inclusion and Visibility at Pride

Factors such as invisibility, insecurity, and inadequate funding prevent intersex people and organizations in many countries from achieving adequate representation in LGBTIQ Pride events. Hiker Chiu pointed out, that due to discrimination and lack of resources such as organizations catering to intersex people, "We are so afraid to be visible. We don't know if it is safe to come out."<sup>289</sup>

In other cases, intersex people aren't offered a seat at the table. Chukwuike reiterated that: "it is when you are granted access to the space – of attending and planning – that you can think of things to be included. Without access, we cannot implement our ideas."<sup>290</sup> According to them, "the lack of intentionality to adequately incorporate intersex perspectives to these events facilitates the inaccessibility."<sup>291</sup>

Many intersex people and rights activists express that they cannot attend Pride due to limited funding.<sup>292</sup> According to Hiker Chiu, "Pride is too expensive for us and it is not possible to self-fund."<sup>293</sup> To address this, Chukwuike said, "I feel that there should be an increase in funding for Prides so that you can incorporate more people. Pride organizers may want to incorporate more

**Photo:** LGBTQ Pride March in Istanbul, Turkey, Sunday, June 26, 2022. Photo by Erhan Demirtas/AP.



people but will be limited by funds available.”<sup>294</sup> In as much as accessing funding is difficult, Champion for Change, in Nepal, is very careful about raising money for Pride because “it is our day to show visibility and celebrate who we are. We don’t want sponsors that will dictate what we should do and take away the essence of Pride.”<sup>295</sup>



Photo: Intersex rights activists at Sydney WorldPride 2023, in March 2023. Photo by Intersex Asia.



# XI. For Us, About Us, By Us: Transgender Pride in the UK and Australia

Transphobia exists within and outside LGBTIQ populations in a bid to erase and delegitimize the experiences of transgender and gender-diverse persons, worldwide. As legislatures seek to introduce laws that limit the rights of transgender people, especially in current anti-trans hot spots such as the United Kingdom and Australia, creating safe spaces for visibility, inclusion, and recognition becomes all the more important. In the United Kingdom, the British Parliament vetoed a bill passed in Scotland seeking to facilitate legal gender recognition for trans and gender diverse persons on the basis that such a law would cause “legal chaos” and “gender tourism.”<sup>296</sup> At the same time, widespread political transphobia has led to the National Health Service closing the only youth gender clinic in England and prohibiting the use of puberty blockers.<sup>297</sup> In Australia, anti-trans rights actors have held transphobic rallies to campaign against trans people’s human rights, including one joined by Neo-Nazis.<sup>298</sup>

## Trans Pride Brighton

Outright spoke with British activist Sabah Choudrey, one of the founders of Trans Pride Brighton, now in its 10th year. According to Choudrey,

Trans Pride was established as community event for transgender and gender-diverse persons to feel safe, be heard, be visible, and take up space.<sup>299</sup>

Part of what led to creating Trans Pride in Brighton is that:

At the main LGBT Pride, we – me, my trans friends and people in my trans community groups – experienced



**Photo:** Vigil in London on 15 February 2023 in tribute of 16-year-old transgender teen Brianna Ghey. Photo by NIKLAS HALLE'N/ Getty Images.

transphobia from other people attending, cisgender and security staff. It made us ask ourselves why we are still attending Pride every year when we have to still fight to have a good time and to be respected. We were fed up.<sup>300</sup>

As a result, Choudrey and their friends started deliberating: “Why don’t we have space that is just for us? How hard will it be to do that?”<sup>301</sup> And so, Trans Pride Brighton was birthed, “to have a space where trans people are accepted where it is a celebration specifically for us, about us, and also by us.”<sup>302</sup> This is now the “largest Trans Pride event outside America.”<sup>303</sup> This movement has continued to grow consistently and rapidly. In 2021, Trans Pride Brighton was an online event with “over 50,000 viewers joining us online throughout the day.”<sup>304</sup>

Trans Pride Brighton have also taken the initiative to take people from Brighton to attend Trans Pride in London, which “helps transgender and gender-diverse people in Brighton experience a space of having a community outside their locality.”<sup>305</sup>

Trans Pride Brighton remains a protest, challenging transphobia in the UK and globally.<sup>306</sup> Participants express “full, revolutionary spirit” as they create a safe space for individual and collective self-expression and challenge

prevailing societal biases.<sup>307</sup> Choudrey explains that the approach of creating and sustaining Trans Pride “feels more important than before as there is so much transphobia rising and we’re getting more of our rights threatened.”<sup>308</sup> This means that:

We’re more determined to make sure that we have spaces that we can create or take transgender people to where they feel safe or where they remember that we’re a whole community and there are a lot of us who are fighting for our rights. Things have changed, and things will change.<sup>309</sup>

Creating Trans Pride Brighton caused a ripple in the movement as “it triggered other people to create their own Trans Pride events” because the conversation is “if the mainstream Pride does not include us, why don’t we make our own Pride?” Choudrey said this leads to more conversations about trans people having more of a part in mainstream Pride events and being more included.<sup>310</sup>

Trans Pride Brighton remains “very much about what the community wants” and for this reason, “it feels amazing knowing that it is trans people behind it.”<sup>311</sup> As with most Pride organizers currently, there is an intention to ensure that corporate sponsorship does not exist to erode the essence of Pride and create a safe, inclusionary and intersectional space. Hence, this Pride resists pinkwashing and prioritizes making a space where people “feel comfortable to go to.”<sup>312</sup>

Outright also spoke with Sabah Choudrey about financial barriers in accessing bigger Pride events, especially for transgender and gender-diverse persons from grassroots communities. According to Choudrey, “it costs a lot to attend Pride as an organization,” an obstacle echoed by several other interviewees in this research.<sup>313</sup> Furthermore:

You can’t just go to Pride as an organization, you still have to fight for a platform, you still have to pay for your space there which is why the big corporations and bigger charities are more visible.<sup>314</sup>



Photo: Brisbane, Australia Pride March, 25 June 2022. Photo by Joshua Prieto/Getty Images.

This is what makes having Trans Pride Brighton crucial, as it is very local and accessible to the community.

Nonetheless, organizers take a lot of steps to ensure the safety of Pride participants, especially young people, because “there are always going to be risks with visibility.”<sup>315</sup> The number of participants, however, helps in empowering the marchers as “you feel impenetrable because you’re like, ‘there’s so many of us, who’s going to mess with us?’”<sup>316</sup>

## Trans Pride Melbourne

It was very powerful and it was very joyous.<sup>317</sup>

Pride in Melbourne, Australia, first took place in 1996, with the participation of 11,000 people.<sup>318</sup> A Pride march has been held every year since then, usually in February.<sup>319</sup>

The idea for Trans Pride emerged in 2019, following attacks by right-wing conservatives against transgender persons during the campaign for marriage equality.<sup>320</sup> “They realized they couldn’t attack gay and lesbian people, so they attacked trans people. And we felt thrown under the bus because we didn’t feel we got enough support.”<sup>321</sup>

With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Trans Pride in Melbourne was held for the first time on 13 November 2022.<sup>322</sup> The goal of the march was “highlighting Trans visibility like never before by uplifting voices in our community and to continuously pass the mic.”<sup>323</sup>

In addition to the visibility achieved on the streets, 3CR, a free-to-air community radio station, implemented a four-hour broadcast with queer presenters handling interviews and playing music. Presenter and advocate Sally Goldner said:

It was an amazing event. We were in the studio, close to the central business district where the march happened. You could feel the energy coming down the line. The sense of pride that was there, and the sense of connection in the face of renewed backlash against transgender people.<sup>324</sup>

Goldner explains that, as someone who has had nearly 30 years of involvement with rainbow communities, this march bolstered support for trans people such that the following Trans Day of Visibility, there was a huge show of support at “the biggest queer-themed rally I’ve ever seen

in Melbourne. It’s so heartening that people are standing with trans people through these times.”<sup>325</sup>

In this manner, Trans visibility and inclusion in Pride serves to aim for equality, “so we can live our lives and achieve our potential the same as anyone who is cisgender or non-LGBTQIA+.”<sup>326</sup>

There are certain challenges in implementing Trans Pride March in Melbourne. Goldner explained to Outright that much of the work done is voluntarily while “people have to earn a living, have food and housing.”<sup>327</sup> In addition, transphobia is on the rise through anti-gender actors as well as political homophobes.<sup>328</sup> In the face of these challenges, Goldner believes having inclusive Pride events is crucial:

It was successful in bringing people together. There was room for anyone who wanted to speak, in addition to the scheduled speakers, when the march reached the state parliamentary house. This gave people from a whole range of intersectional identities – trans people of color, people working with trans people in custody, among others – the chance to raise specific issues.<sup>329</sup>

Trans Pride March Melbourne seeks to be platform that achieves concrete goals for the community without politicizing participation or emphasizing fanfare. For Sally Goldner, events should be structured to create accessible, inclusive, and safe spaces to engage in dialogue about multiple forms of discrimination, and how to build community and allyship.<sup>330</sup>

# XII. Dyke\* March Berlin: “It Just Connects”

In countries throughout the world, lesbian, bisexual and queer women and people who relate to LBQ identities have sought to carve out space for themselves in mainstream Pride marches – a often dominated by cis gay man – while also creating their own centers of gravity, one of which, in many cities, is Dyke\* March.

In Berlin, Dyke\* March reached its 9th anniversary in 2022. Berlin began as an effort for lesbian visibility in Berlin in 2013.<sup>331</sup> It is held the day before the Berlin Pride, called Christopher Street Day (CSD) Berlin.<sup>332</sup> The march is community-centered, and attendees are free to use signs and other forms of expressions the way they choose, in alignment with inclusion and visibility for lesbian, bisexual, trans and queer people in particular.<sup>333</sup>

Elli Petropaki, one of the organizers of the march, said, “It is important for us to create room for people to express themselves and promote the visibility of our community.”<sup>334</sup> Dyke\* March Berlin is open to anyone who supports lesbian visibility: “straight people, cis people, gay men, whomever. They’re all welcome as long as they support visibility and want to be there for the cause.”<sup>335</sup> The asterisk following “dyke” stands for inclusivity.

Petropaki told Outright that the general feedback is very positive because there are so “few lesbian spaces.” They added:

At the March, seeing so many lesbians – up to 10,000 – in one place is crazy. This is because there still aren’t many lesbian places and spaces in Berlin. There is an incredibly positive energy, people are so excited to be there. They plan their holidays around it and every year before we announce we get messages asking “when is it going to be this year?” From about 2,000 participants in the first year, the march has grown to nearly 10,000 in 2022.<sup>336</sup>

Petropaki said Dyke\* March Berlin brings together:



[A community of] lesbians all over – lesbian families, lesbian elders, young people who are just coming out. It's great to see all of those people come together showing many ways one can exist as a lesbian in Berlin and also to connect and find each other because it can be sort of an isolating experience. There are so many stories about people meeting there or then going afterwards to get drinks, or going after the party, then to the party, meeting different people that you wouldn't meet normally. It just connects.<sup>337</sup>

Having older LGBTIQ people at the march can spark intergenerational dialogue. Petropaki told Outright that the elders are pleased to witness progress in the movement, while the young people can see that they also have a future.<sup>338</sup>

In keeping the march community focused, the organizing team of Dyke\* March Berlin keeps the budget low and sticks to crowdfunding to raise funds. According to Petropaki, "one of our main goals is to stay uncommercialized without commodifying the fight and our identities. It's also very important for us not to get involved with political parties."<sup>339</sup>

In addition to difficulty raising sufficient funds, Dyke\* March organizers must ensure they have about 50 volunteers acting as security to minimize contact of marchers with police, and this is challenging as "everyone wants to just go there, have fun, let loose and be themselves without having their mind on such tasks."<sup>340</sup>

With the rise of transphobia, Petropaki told Outright that some anti-trans rights marchers came to the 2022 Dyke\* March, with transphobic slogans "filming us in the hopes that we were going to attack them."<sup>341</sup> Although the team could not expel the counter-protestors from the march for legal reasons, "we managed to get to the end of the parade. It affected some of the energy but the good thing is most of the 10,000 marchers never knew what happened and could still keep up the positive energy."<sup>342</sup> Presently, "we are better prepared and trained for these sort of interferences."<sup>343</sup>

Ultimately, what is important for the team is to prioritize community, visibility, and collective care.

# Acknowledgments

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Photo: Friends celebrating Pride together in the streets.

# Annex: Status of Pride Around the World in 2022

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In 2022, activists in the following 105 countries around the world held public Pride events: Albania, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, and Vietnam.

Among those 105 countries, activists in at least 63 countries were able to hold public Pride events in more than one location in 2022: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Eswatini, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary,

India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Malta, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, and Vietnam.

In the following 91 countries, Outright did not identify any public Pride events in 2022: Afghanistan, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Bahrain, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Dominica, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Federated states of Micronesia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Qatar, Republic of the Congo, Russia Federation, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

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