

April 11, 2019

The Hon. Mike Pompeo
U.S. Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We, the undersigned 99 elected leaders and LGBTQ, human rights and faith-based organizations and institutions, write to urge you to condemn — in the strongest terms possible — published reports that the Sultan of Brunei Hassanal Bolkiah has begun implementation of the nation’s penal code, which includes death by stoning and whipping of LGBTQ people. Additionally, we urge you to make bringing an end to these barbaric practices a key foreign policy priority of the United States and to use all diplomatic tools and avenues — including the imposition of Global Magnitsky sanctions for any official who implements these laws — to achieve such an end.

It is a grotesque understatement to assert that a state-sanctioned death penalty for LGBTQ people and those who commit “adultery,” amputation for robbery, flogging of women who have abortions and criminalization of exposing Muslim children to the beliefs and practices of any religion other than Islam are violations of basic human rights, religious freedom, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and international norms. Indeed, it is our belief — and the longstanding view of the United States — that when a government targets minority groups for persecution, abuse, and murder, that government is committing crimes against humanity.

Brunei’s official announcement that it will reinstate the practice of public stoning of people accused of LGBTQ relations and adultery must be rejected and sanctioned by the United States. Such state-sanctioned practices have no place in today’s world, and rightly have drawn strong expressions of disapproval around the world, including from many Islamic leaders who reject the Sultan’s interpretation of shariah law.

Far from being prompted to reconsider its horrifying policy, however, the Sultanate doubled down in defense of its parallel legal system and Syariah Penal Code Order (SPCO) 2013 from 3rd April 2019, in order to “criminaliz(e) and deter acts that are against the teachings of Islam.”

During much of the 70 years since World War II, America sought to provide global moral leadership, including the advancement and promotion of respect for democracy and human rights. In recent decades, the United States has strongly condemned countries around the world that criminalize and discriminate against LGBTQ people or those perceived to be gender-nonconforming.

At the 2016 Republican National Convention, President Trump committed to doing “everything in [his] power” to protect LGBTQ people. In October 2017, State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said that the United States “unequivocally condemns the application of the death penalty for conduct such as homosexuality, blasphemy, adultery, and apostasy.” During your own confirmation hearing to serve as U.S. Secretary of State, you said that you “deeply believe that LGBTQ persons have every right that every other person in the world would have.”

We urge you to condemn Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah’s appalling decision to begin implementing SPCO 2013 immediately and to use all diplomatic tools and avenues — including the imposition of sanctions, barring the Sultan and other senior Brunei government officials from entering the United States, and the seizure of assets — if the law is not withdrawn.

Sincerely,

Equality California
California Legislative LGBTQ Caucus
California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara
California Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins
California Senator Scott Wiener

California Senator Cathleen Galgiani
California Assemblymember Todd Gloria
California Assemblymember Sabrina Cervantes
California Assemblymember Susan Talamantes Eggman
California Assemblymember Evan Low
Los Angeles City Controller Ron Galperin
Los Angeles City Councilmember Mike Bonin
Los Angeles City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell
Adair Co GLBT Resource Center
Athlete Ally
American Unity Fund
Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center
Brooklyn Community Pride Center
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Compass LGBTQ Community Center
Equality New Mexico
Equality North Carolina
Equality Ohio
Equality Texas
Equality Utah
Equality Maine
Fairness Campaign
Georgia Equality
Gender Spectrum
Human Rights Campaign
Identity, Inc.
International Institute on Race, Equality and Human Rights
Lambda Legal
LGBT Bar Association of New York
LGBT Center OC
LGBT Center of Raleigh
LGBT Equality Alliance of Chester County (PA)
LGBT Technology Partnership & Institute
LGBTQ Center of Riverside County
The LGBTQ Center Long Beach
The LOFT LGBT Community Services Center
MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health & Rights
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA)
National Trans Bar Association
One Colorado
Out Boulder County
OutFront Minnesota
OutNebraska
Pacific Pride Foundation
Persad Center, Inc.
Positive Women's Network-USA
Rainbow Mobile
Resource Center
Silver State Equality
The Source LGBT+ Center
Sacramento LGBT Community Center
San Bernardino LGBTQ Center
Solano Pride Center

SunServe
The Trevor Project
Tennessee Equality Project
The Center: 7 Rivers LGBTQ Connection
Whitman-Walker Health
William Way LGBT Community Center
Youth Outlook
Muslims for Progressive Values
Muslim Public Affairs Council
Bat Yam Temple of the Islands
Beit T'Shuvah
Beth Chayim Chadashim
Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ
Central Conference of American Rabbis
Chadeish Yameinu
Congregation Beth Israel
Congregation Kol Ami
Congregation Neveh Shalom
The Global Justice Institute
Hollywood United Methodist Church
IKAR
Inspire Spiritual Community
Institute for Jewish Spirituality
JQ International
Keshet
Lehrhaus Literary
Lishkon Ba'arafel
The Network of Spiritual Progressives
Philipstown Reform Synagogue
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Secular Coalition for America
Temple Beth Hillel
Temple Beth Sholom of Orange County
Tikkun4Change
Unitarian Universalist Church of Studio City
University Synagogue
Wholly Present
Wisdom House Denver