

February 26, 2018

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

We are writing to you as human rights, health, and development organizations to raise our deep concern about news that the State Department's annual Human Rights Report will no longer highlight the full range of abuses and human rights violations experienced most especially by women, girls, LGBTQI people, and other marginalized peoples around the world.

According to State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert, officials "will sharpen the focus of the report on abuses of internationally recognized human rights and the most egregious issues." According to media reports, this means removing or dramatically changing the way the U.S. Government reports on women's and girls' enjoyment of their rights to health, life, freedom from violence, and a host of other rights, including most especially those related to sexual and reproductive health.

As organizations committed to gender equality and women's human rights, we see in our work how violations of these internationally-recognized human rights are often among the most frequent and egregious abuses women and girls experience. Gender discrimination is a pernicious societal harm that impacts women's realization of their human rights in extensive and often irrevocable ways. International human rights authorities have clearly established governments' human rights obligations in the many ways such discrimination is manifest—from violence against women, to maternal mortality, to restrictions on women's access to comprehensive reproductive and sexual health. Willful failure to include reporting on these rights violations is a callous disregard both of the abuses experienced by women and girls and of established human rights norms that recognize the government obligations to end them.

As the State Department's Human Rights Reports have historically shown, human rights are indivisible and universal. Threats to women's human rights cannot be stricken from the report without sending a broader message to abusive governments that the United States will not hold them to account for such violations. When women's rights are limited, so are broader pathways to empowerment—economic, social, political, or otherwise.

Erasing content that Foreign Service Officers have worked for months to craft based on their expertise and the contributions of civil society and experts around the world undermines efforts of the United States and, more importantly, human rights defenders in their own countries to promote human rights. Although your spokesperson defends this move as an effort to foster efficiency and decrease duplication from other organizations' reports, you miss the critical point of having the U.S. Government publish them within the context of an extensive human rights analysis. Editing out the breadth of abuses typically covered by this report weakens its usefulness to put governments on notice to address abuses within their borders, and it may embolden them to regress in the promotion of women's rights.

The power of this report has been putting the full force of the U.S. Government behind the full human rights agenda, and standing in solidarity with rights-based individuals, organizations, and movements everywhere. Publishing this report without all human rights represented jeopardizes this. It will become an incomplete and inaccurate document that is silent on many of the human rights abuses the United States has previously championed to end.

We call on you to uphold the credibility of this important human rights tool—that so many of our colleagues around the world use to hold governments to account. The rights of all people of all genders to enjoy the full spectrum of rights, without discrimination or government interference cannot be in dispute within your department. Your leadership is needed to immediately intervene and reverse course on this decision.

Signed,

1. 9to5, National Association of Working Women
2. Active Projectile Ltd
3. Advancing Girls' Education in Africa
4. Advocates for Youth
5. Alliance for Peacebuilding
6. American Atheists
7. American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
8. American Psychological Association
9. APEDDUB
10. Athlete Ally
11. Aube Nouvelle pour la Femme et le Développement
12. AVAC
13. Bangladesh Model Youth Parliament
14. Barnabas Charity Outreach
15. Better World Campaign
16. Beyond Beijing Committee
17. CADIRE CAMEROON ASSOCIATION
18. CARE USA
19. Catholics for Choice
20. Center for Biological Diversity
21. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
22. Center for Reproductive Rights
23. CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
24. CERPA(Centre d'Echanges et de Ressources pour la Promotion des Actions Communautaires)
25. ChildFund International
26. CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality
27. Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights
28. Council for Global Equality
29. EngenderHealth
30. Equality California

31. Equality Now
32. F'INE Pasifika Aotearoa
33. Family Equality Council
34. FORGE, Inc
35. Freedom House
36. Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
37. Friends of UNFPA
38. Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer - FEIM-
39. Gender Equality Initiative, Elliott School, GW
40. GESTOS- HIV, Communication and Gender
41. Girl Rising
42. GirlForward
43. Global Fund for Children
44. Global Fund for Women
45. Global Health Justice Partnership, Yale University
46. Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
47. Global Network of Black People working in HIV
48. Global Progressive Hub
49. Global Rights for Women
50. Global Women's Institute
51. Global Women's Institute at the George Washington University
52. GreeneWorks
53. Haus of Khameleon
54. Heartland Alliance International
55. HIAS
56. Housing Works, Inc.
57. Human Rights Campaign
58. Human Rights Watch
59. Ibis Reproductive Health
60. Inclusive Security
61. International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)
62. International AIDS Society
63. International Center for Research on Women
64. International Rescue Committee
65. International Women's Development Agency
66. International Women's Health Coalition
67. International Women's Rights Action Watch
68. International Youth Foundation
69. International-Curricula Educators Association
70. IntraHealth International
71. Ipas
72. Jacobs Institute of Women's Health
73. JAGO NARI (Fighting For Women Empowerment)
74. John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
75. Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative "Feminita"
76. Khalili Consulting

77. Latinoamerican and Caribbean Afrodescendent Women Network
78. Los Angeles LGBT Center
79. Marie Stopes International
80. Mercy Corps
81. Milaan Foundation
82. NARAL Pro-Choice America
83. NASTAD
84. National Abortion Federation
85. National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
86. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
87. National Black Justice Coalition
88. National Center for Transgender Equality
89. National Council of Jewish Women
90. National Employment Lawyers Association
91. National Network to End Domestic Violence
92. National Organization for Women
93. National Partnership for Women & Families
94. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
95. National Women's Health Network
96. National Women's Law Center
97. NFBPWC-NYC
98. NFBPWC-USA
99. OutRight Action International
100. OutServe-SLDN
101. PAI
102. PARI o DISPARE
103. PaRiter
104. Pathfinder International
105. Peace X Peace
106. People For the American Way
107. Plan International USA
108. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
109. Population Connection Action Fund
110. Population Council
111. Population Institute
112. Pride at Work
113. Promundo-US
114. PSI
115. Rainbow Pride Foundation
116. Refugees International
117. Regional Centre for international development cooperation
118. ReSista
119. Saferworld
120. Save the Children
121. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
122. Shadhika

123. Sierra Club
124. Simavi
125. Smash Strategies
126. Support Group and Resource Center on Sexuality Studies
127. Tahirih Justice Center
128. The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS
129. The Employee Rights Advocacy Institute for Law & Policy
130. The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF)
131. The HUBB bk
132. The Hunger Project
133. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
134. The Lesbian and Gay Association of Liberia (LEGAL)
135. The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
136. The Voices and Faces Project
137. Tonga Leitis Association
138. TONGA LEITIS Association
139. Too Young To Wed
140. U.S. National Committee for UN Women
141. Union for Reform Judaism
142. United Methodist Church
143. United Nations Association-USA
144. Universal Access Project
145. University of Pennsylvania
146. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
147. V-Day and One Billion Rising
148. Vision Spring Initiatives
149. Vital Voices Global Partnership
150. What Works Association
151. Witness to Mass Incarceration
152. Women Action for Gender Equality (WAGE)
153. Women Employed
154. Women Enabled International
155. Women for Afghan Women
156. Women for Peace
157. Women for Women International
158. Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS)
159. Women Thrive Alliance
160. Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
161. Women's Refugee Commission
162. Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, Moravian College
163. Woodhull Freedom Foundation
164. World Education
165. YWCA USA
166. Zonta International