

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. Amnesty International USA
10. APEDDUB
11. Athlete Ally
12. Aube Nouvelle pour la Femme et le Développement
13. AVAC
14. Bangladesh Model Youth Parliament
15. Barnabas Charity Outreach
16. Better World Campaign
17. Beyond Beijing Committee
18. CADIRE CAMEROON ASSOCIATION
19. CARE USA
20. Catholics for Choice
21. Center for Biological Diversity
22. Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE)
23. Center for Reproductive Rights
24. CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
25. CERPA(Centre d'Echanges et de Ressources pour la Promotion des Actions Communautaires)
26. ChildFund International
27. CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality
28. Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights

29. Council for Global Equality
30. EngenderHealth
31. Equality California
32. Equality Now
33. F'INE Pasifika Aotearoa
34. Family Equality Council
35. FORGE, Inc
36. Freedom House
37. Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
38. Friends of UNFPA
39. Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer - FEIM-
40. Futures Without Violence
41. Gender Equality Initiative, Elliott School, GW
42. GESTOS- HIV, Communication and Gender
43. Girl Rising
44. GirlForward
45. Global Fund for Children
46. Global Fund for Women
47. Global Health Justice Partnership, Yale University
48. Global Justice Institute, Metropolitan Community Churches
49. Global Network of Black People working in HIV
50. Global Progressive Hub
51. Global Rights for Women
52. Global Women's Institute
53. Global Women's Institute at the George Washington University
54. GreeneWorks
55. Haus of Khameleon
56. Heartland Alliance International
57. HIAS
58. Housing Works, Inc.
59. Human Rights Campaign
60. Human Rights Watch
61. Ibis Reproductive Health
62. Inclusive Security
63. International Action Network for Gender Equity & Law (IANGEL)
64. International AIDS Society
65. International Center for Research on Women
66. International Fellowship of Reconciliation
67. International Rescue Committee
68. International Women's Development Agency
69. International Women's Health Coalition
70. International Women's Rights Action Watch
71. International Youth Foundation

72. International-Curricula Educators Association
73. IntraHealth International
74. Ipas
75. Jacobs Institute of Women's Health
76. JAGO NARI (Fighting For Women Empowerment)
77. John Snow, Inc. (JSI)
78. Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative "Feminita"
79. Khalili Consulting
80. Landesa (Rural Development Institute)
81. Latinoamerican and Caribbean Afrodescendent Women Network
82. Los Angeles LGBT Center
83. MADRE
84. Marie Stopes International
85. Mercy Corps
86. Milaan Foundation
87. NARAL Pro-Choice America
88. NASTAD
89. National Abortion Federation
90. National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
91. National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
92. National Black Justice Coalition
93. National Center for Transgender Equality
94. National Council of Jewish Women
95. National Employment Lawyers Association
96. National Network to End Domestic Violence
97. National Organization for Women
98. National Partnership for Women & Families
99. National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
100. National Women's Health Network
101. National Women's Law Center
102. NFBPWC-NYC
103. NFBPWC-USA
104. OutRight Action International
105. OutServe-SLDN
106. PAI
107. PARI o DISPARE
108. PaRiter
109. Pathfinder International
110. Peace X Peace
111. People For the American Way
112. Plan International USA
113. Planned Parenthood Federation of America
114. Population Connection Action Fund

115. Population Council
116. Population Institute
117. Pride at Work
118. Promundo-US
119. PSI
120. Rainbow Pride Foundation
121. Refugees International
122. Regional Centre for international development cooperation
123. ReSista
124. Saferworld
125. Save the Children
126. Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
127. Shadhika
128. Sierra Club
129. Simavi
130. Smash Strategies
131. Support Group and Resource Center on Sexuality Studies
132. Tahirih Justice Center
133. The Coalition for Children Affected by AIDS
134. The Employee Rights Advocacy Institute for Law & Policy
135. The Global Forum on MSM & HIV (MSMGF)
136. The HUBB bk
137. The Hunger Project
138. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
139. The Lesbian and Gay Association of Liberia (LEGAL)
140. The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
141. The Voices and Faces Project
142. Tonga Leitis Association
143. TONGA LEITIS Association
144. Too Young To Wed
145. U.S. National Committee for UN Women
146. Union for Reform Judaism
147. United Methodist Church
148. United Nations Association-USA
149. Universal Access Project
150. University of Pennsylvania
151. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights
152. V-Day and One Billion Rising
153. Vision Spring Initiatives
154. Vital Voices Global Partnership
155. What Works Association
156. Witness to Mass Incarceration
157. Women Action for Gender Equality (WAGE)

158. Women Employed
159. Women Enabled International
160. Women for Afghan Women
161. Women for Peace
162. Women for Women International
163. Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation (WCAPS)
164. Women Thrive Alliance
165. Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
166. Women's Refugee Commission
167. Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program, Moravian College
168. Woodhull Freedom Foundation
169. World Education
170. YWCA USA
171. Zonta International