

29 January 2025

Statement in response to President Donald Trump's regression on Human Rights:

On January 20, 2025, Donald Trump was inaugurated as the 47th president of the United States of America, and later the same day he signed a series of executive orders that are anti-science, serve to defund health authorities and expressly target marginalised persons. An abhorrent order was framed targeting transgender persons with misguided intentions of defending women from [what](#) they call 'gender ideology' and the restoration of 'biological truth'.

As Gender Dynamix we are gravely concerned about these executive orders and the domestic and global implications these have for people who are transgender, gender diverse, intersex, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants etc. We note that this backsliding on human rights and the flagrant attack on transgender and intersex persons in particular, will embolden other countries to perpetuate similar legislative provisions.

We are particularly concerned about the executive order that seeks to erase the identities of transgender, gender diverse and intersex persons, by fronting women's rights and the recognition of only two sexes as justification thereof. The momentum of the anti-gender, anti-rights and anti-science movements is growing in South Africa and Africa at large. The executive orders signed by Trump have far reaching consequences including inspiring and further mobilising these anti-gender groups.

Both pre-colonial histories and scientific evidence globally recognise and validate the existences of people who live beyond the narrow sex and gender binary. The notion that sex and gender is binary is steeped in anti-gender political ideology rather than scientific fact. It must be emphasised that gender, sex, sexuality and identity have never been binary, they have always been fluid and have enjoyed peaceful co-existence in African communities.

The order professes to defend women. However, it is a position steeped in patriarchal, classist and racist beliefs about sex, gender and identity. The impact of the order is not just an attempt at invalidating and erasing transgender and gender diverse persons but will also result in further brutal policing of women's bodies and identities to enforce and maintain this rigid order. We know that the executive order is also less about scientific evidence and more about political scapegoating. Indeed, the notion that sexes are defined at conception reveals deep ignorance that attempts to afford personhood to a foetus. It must be noted that at conception every foetus would have to be classified as female given the gestational process of identity development.

This order marks a troubling set back in the fight to advance the basic human rights of marginalised population groups, particularly transgender, gender diverse and intersex persons. We are grateful for South Africa's explicit constitutional provisions within our Bill of Rights that guarantee our human rights and freedoms; these guarantees are precious, and we hold on to these dearly. We are acutely aware of explicit harm to, and pushbacks on, the provision of gender affirming health care and sexual and reproductive justice in South Africa, by groups linked to American hate groups under the guise of apparent health ethics.

This American Presidential order serves to heighten the already existent stigma, discrimination, systematic barriers and violence experienced by trans and gender diverse persons globally. At the heart of it, the executive order, and its global implications, undermines the ability of transgender, gender diverse and intersex persons to live freely and authentically. It denies people the right of freedom of expression by forcing people in hiding due to state-sponsored hatred and violence. Moreover, dehumanising political and legal actions such as these will have catastrophic implications on access to basic health care, employment, education as well as personal safety. Such regressive policies bolster transphobic rhetoric and behaviour by legitimising discrimination based on gender identity and sex characteristics. Policies, regulations and orders of this nature further marginalise and dehumanise transgender and gender diverse persons, by creating hostile living conditions, communities, and the incitement of hatred with legal sanction.

During stressful, harmful and hateful times, it is easy to fear and mistrust. We are gathered collectively and resolute, determined to resist, be courageous, to confront and to fight. Whilst many of us may feel uncertain, scared and angry, we are engaging in acts of collective selfcare, enjoying glimmers of joy and practicing compassion and kindness for ourselves as forms of resistance against the forces that seek to demotivate and tire us.

We stand in solidarity with human rights defenders in the USA and the world over, who continue to fight for recognition and justice over erasure and hatred. We believe that this is a set-back for human rights but in no way is it a defeat. We continue to hold on to hope that love and embrace will transcend hatred, division and exclusion; and that the promise that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, shall be realised.

Yours in solidarity.

Gender Dynamix