Trans Advocacy Week: Making trans voices heard at the United Nations

article, non-discrimination, trans activists, un

Trans Advocacy Week is a vital initiative at a time when trans people are often talked about but rarely listened to. Each year, from June to July, a coalition of civil society organisations comes together to support trans activists in amplifying their voices in the UN, one of the world's most influential human rights spaces.

What is UN Trans Advocacy Week and why does it matter?

United Nations Trans Advocacy Week provides trans activists with an opportunity to speak directly to global decision-makers. This initiative brings attention to the challenges and discrimination faced by trans and gender diverse people to those who need to hear it the most: world leaders, politicians and other decision-makers. This drives action towards greater equality, acceptance, and understanding.

All over the world, trans and gender diverse people face more discrimination, are more likely to be unemployed and experience more barriers to higher education than the general public. These factors make it almost impossible for trans people to access international advocacy spaces such as the United Nations. UN Trans Advocacy Week bridges this gap by opening UN spaces up to trans activists, particularly those from underrepresented regions such as the Global South and East.

Since 2017, UN Trans Advocacy Week has been bringing trans and gender diverse human rights defenders to Geneva, Switzerland, to participate in the UN Human Rights Council during its June/July session.

What is the UN Human Rights Council?

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) meets regularly to discuss and address global human rights issues. It covers topics such as freedom of speech, the right to education, equality for all, and much more. The UNHRC is responsible for investigating human rights violations and making recommendations to improve the protection of human rights worldwide.

The council consists of representatives from 47 Member States who are tasked with promoting and safeguarding human rights on a global scale. For more information, visit ILGA World's resources on the UNHRC or the official UN Human Rights Council website (OHCHR).

Key topics for Trans Advocacy Week 2025

UN Trans Advocacy Week 2025 will focus on critical issues affecting trans communities globally, including:

- **The impact of cuts to foreign aid:** Examining how reduced funding affects the trans movement worldwide, including advocacy efforts and service provision
- **Legislative rollbacks due to the anti-gender movement:** Addressing the growing trend of restrictive policies that undermine trans rights.

- **Renewal of the United Nations mandate of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**: Advocating for the continuation of this UN mandate to ensure violence and discrimination against trans and gender diverse people remain on the international human rights agenda.

Why is Trans Advocacy Week important?

Trans Advocacy Week empowers activists with the knowledge and experience to navigate international human rights mechanisms. Participants receive training on UN advocacy, deliver statements to the Human Rights Council, connect with other trans and gender diverse activists, and meet directly with representatives of UN Member States to lobby directly on pressing issues faced by trans people in their countries.

This experience provides a fundamental opportunity for community leaders to strengthen local advocacy efforts through direct engagement with UN bodies and mechanisms. By bringing awareness of human rights violations against trans and gender diverse people to the attention of the UN, they contribute to international dialogue and policy change.

Who is participating?

In June 2025, we will be bringing 16 participants from all regions of the world to Geneva for the 59th Human Rights Council session.

UN TAW is co-organised by:

- Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN)
- East Africa Trans Health and Advocacy Network (EATHAN)
- Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE)
- ILGA World
- RFSL, Swedish Federation for LGBTQ Rights
- TGEU: Trans Europe & Central Asia

Through Trans Advocacy Week, trans and gender diverse voices are heard at the highest levels, advancing equality and human rights for all.