



Mailing Address: SALGA, C/O LGBT Center, 208 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10011

Press Statement

SALGA, as a partner to Rock for Rights, affirms its position as a social and political organization and condemns discrimination and abuse based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The existence of archaic laws such as Section 377 in the Indian penal code and similar laws in other South Asian countries violate the basic human right to life, happiness and dignity for millions of South Asians.

Laws such as these encourage public intolerance and force millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and transgendered individuals to live in fear and secrecy. These laws are used by government agencies to systematically persecute, blackmail, arrest and terrorize sexual minorities. They are further used by homophobic elements across the world to suppress and discourage the critical work of HIV-prevention, leaving sexual minorities disenfranchised and helpless in the face of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

With the upsurge of human rights movements, especially in South Asia, governments in this region have the historic opportunity to end discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. This discrimination is in no way different from widely condemned discrimination based on caste, class, gender, religion and race. As California battles Proposition 8 and Iran hangs its homosexuals, we must not forget that intolerance differs only in degrees, and that the battle for human rights must be fought throughout the world.

SALGA

South Asian Lesbian & Gay Association of New York City

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We urge governments across the globe to demonstrate a genuine commitment to upholding universal human rights and to cease government sanctioned discrimination against sexual minorities. These governments must address all forms of economic, political, and social exclusion and grant equal rights to all citizens. Equal rights must include the right to marriage, inheritance and other allied rights which are inalienable to the pursuit of happiness.

As a community based organization, SALGA-NYC addresses these issues by working at a grassroots level and partnering with other South Asian organizations in New York City and across the world. We aspire to create a world free of discrimination, particularly that based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

SALGA-NYC was started in 1991 as a response to the need for a community based organization for South Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer individuals. We are a social, political and support group for people who trace their descent from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tibet as well as people of South Asian descent from countries such as Guyana, Trinidad and Kenya. Some of our activities include monthly support group meetings, literary salons, social and community events and sexual health education programs for the South Asian LGBT/Queer community.

We hope that events such as Rock for Rights and the recent legislation granting equal rights to sexual minorities in Nepal will inspire others across the world to modify laws that deny sexual minorities rights that are unequivocally theirs. These include the most basic of those guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – the right to happiness, security and equality. Every human being must have these rights to live a life of dignity free of fear, oppression and enforced invisibility.