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Excerpt:

## **South Korea challenged over "rampant discrimination" against gays**

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Lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people in South Korea face "rampant" discrimination.

A coalition of LGBT groups and straight supporters have used tomorrow's 60th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations to draw attention to their situation.

They called for protection from discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation.

The Democratic Labour Party, gay men's rights group Chingusai and Queer Junior, a youth group, are among the members of the Mujigae Alliance.

It has presented a 30-point declaration of LGBT rights, among them the right to privacy at work.

"After the universal declaration, the whole world started to abolish discrimination according to race, sex, nationality, age, religious beliefs, disability and health status," a Chingusai spokesperson told The Korea Times.

"However, sexual orientation is still one of the taboo subjects in this country and discrimination is rampant.

"We hope the announcement will enhance people's understanding toward someone 'different' and get them to think about their rights. We are different but equal."

There is no reference to homosexuality in the South Korean Constitution or Civil Penal Code.

However, in practice, discrimination against gay people and censorship against gay websites is fairly common.

Homosexuality has only in recent years gained some acceptance in South Korean society, with its strict Confucian traditions and strong Roman Catholic influence.

Last month the South Korean government asked the constitutional court to confirm the ban on gays serving in the country's Armed Forces.

Servicemen face a year in jail for homosexual acts. In August a military court asked for a review of the constitutionality of the ban.

All young men in the country are obliged to serve in the military or in the riot police for up to two years and have to take a test at the time of enlistment which includes various questions about their sexual orientation.

South Korea has a standing army of 687,000, the 6th largest in the world, with 4.5m reserve personnel.