

Invisible no more? The growing visibility of intersex issues at the United Nations.

Ernesto Zelayandia-Gonzalez

Andalusian School of Public Health. University of Granada.

Abstract

In recent years there has been an increasing visibility of intersex people's issues and experiences of human rights violations at international human rights institutions and monitoring bodies. At the United Nations, for example, intersex issues have been mentioned at Human Rights Council's universal periodic review (UPR) since 2011 and have since added up more than 600 UPR-recommendations that broadly mention intersex people and call upon member states to protect the rights of this group of people. Likewise, to date, there are more than 60 treaty bodies concluding observations calling member States to fulfill their human rights obligations as they specifically pertain to intersex people. This paper follows the inclusion of intersex issues in the text of the United Nations distinct bodies' recommendations and concluding observations. By tracking down explicit mentions of "intersex", reviewing the response of member states, observing whether or not recommendations are accepted, and contrasting this information with local legislation, policy, and practice concerning intersex issues, I argue that intersex human rights have gained significant visibility in the international fora of human rights in arguably record time, however, this has proven insufficient to ignite significant change at the domestic level, as the majority of UN Member States continue to ignore the needs of intersex people and activists' demands.