

U.S. to deny diplomatic visas for same-sex partners of diplomats and UN officials



Washington, October 4 (RHC)-- The Donald Trump administration has introduced new visa regulations in the U.S. which deny visas to same-sex domestic partners of foreign diplomats and United Nations employees. It also requires same-sex couples already in the U.S. on a diplomatic visa to get married and show proof of marriage by December 31st or they will have to leave the country within 30 days.

“The Department of State will not issue a G-4 visa for same-sex domestic partners,” the U.N. human resources chief explained in a note distributed to staff last month. “As of 1 October 2018, same-sex domestic partners ... seeking to join newly-arrived U.N. officials must provide proof of marriage to eligible for a G-4 visa or to seek a change in such status.” G-4 visas are granted to employees of international organizations and their immediate families.

The U.S. mission to the United Nations portrayed the decision as an effort to match its international visa practices with current U.S. policies. “Same-sex spouses of U.S. diplomats now enjoy the same rights and benefits as opposite-sex spouses,” the U.S. mission wrote in a July 12 note to U.N.-based delegations. “Consistent with [State] Department policy, partners accompanying members of permanent missions or seeking to join the same must generally be married in order to be eligible” for a diplomatic visa.

The White House decision met with wide criticisms from various groups. Observers say this will increase hurdles on foreign couples from countries that criminalize same-sex marriages. Also, if the couples who are presently living in the U.S. have to go to a country where same-sex marriage is illegal, it might pose an undue danger to their lives.

Samantha Power, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, denounced the new policy on Twitter as “needlessly cruel and bigoted.” The UN-GLOBE, advocates for LGBT equality in the U.N. termed this decision as “an unfortunate change in rules. Couples already inside of the United States could go to city hall and get married. But they could potentially be exposed to prosecution if they return to a country that criminalizes homosexuality or same-sex marriages.”

“The U.S. government should recognize, as it had for almost nine years until today, that requiring a marriage as proof of bona fide partnership is a bad and cruel policy, one that replicates the terrible discrimination many LGBT people face in their own countries, and should be immediately reversed,” wrote Akshaya Kumar, the Deputy U.N. Director of Human Rights Watch.

According to the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), currently, 71 countries criminalize same-sex relations. At present, there are 10 U.N. employees in the U.S. who would need to get married for their partners to be allowed to stay in the country.

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