



## **Lemkin Institute Statement on the Genocidal Nature of the Gender Critical Movement's Ideology and Practice**

*Released 29 November 2022*

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention voices its concern over the growing number of laws introduced in the United States that target transgender individuals and the transgender community. Anti-trans hostility in the US has become a staple of the Republican Party's election strategy and is clearly being used to stoke voters' fears of a changing world by raising the specter of a malevolent polluting force tied to liberalism, cosmopolitanism, and democracy. The Lemkin Institute believes that the so-called "gender critical movement" that is behind these laws is a fascist movement furthering a specifically genocidal ideology that seeks the complete eradication of trans identity from the world.

Genocidal ideologies are ideologies that deny or seek to erase the existence of a specific group because of the supposed threat it poses to the holders of the ideology. The gender critical movement simultaneously denies that transgender identity is real and seeks to eradicate it completely from society. Many gender critical ideologues identify themselves as feminists and believe themselves to be protecting women from men. They accuse transgender women of being stealth men and of transgender men of being self-hating women. The movement, a centerpiece of right wing ascendancy in the Western world, calls for discrimination against and harrassment of transgender individuals and the transgender community through laws and policies that criminalize trans identity and trans life. The Lemkin Institute is alarmed by the growing number of attempts in the Western world to enact policies and spread prejudice that threaten the well-being, and even the existence, of transgender people.

The gender critical movement is a loose international affiliation of people and groups who promote far-right ideas that have gained a degree of centrist respectability through their purported defense of women. The movement alleges that people cannot determine their own sex or gender, and that the genitalia observed by doctors at birth are the final determinants of biological sex as well as the permanent markers of gender belonging. Focusing primarily on the imagined threat posed by transgender women, gender critical ideologues believe that transgender women are in fact men who are seeking to dominate cisgender women (women whose sense of

self corresponds with their birth sex) by impersonating them and thereby gaining access to women's bathrooms, women's locker rooms, women's sports teams, and other women's spaces. They routinely accuse transgender people of being mentally ill and believe that the parents, family members, and medical professionals who support transgender people are committing morally reprehensible acts against the transgender individuals (by nurturing their 'illness') and against society at large (by permitting dangerous people and ideas to take root).

The ideological constructions of transgender women promoted by gender critical ideologues are particularly genocidal. They share many features in common with other, better known, genocidal ideologies. Transgender women are represented as stealth border crossers who seek to defile the purity of cisgender women, much as Tutsi women were viewed in Hutu Power ideology and Jewish men in Nazi antisemitism. Trans people in general are framed as figures that threaten the wholeness of the patriarchal nuclear family as well as the strength and vitality of national communities, much in the way that ethnic and national targets of genocide are viewed as cosmic enemies of the perpetrator group. Like the religious targets of genocidal violence, trans people are often described as somehow polluted, sinful, or against God. They are blamed for a host of social problems that have nothing to do with them or with the free expression of their identities. The Lemkin Institute reminds readers that one of the first libraries to be burned under the National Socialists in Germany was the library and archive of Magnus Hirshfeld's Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, a groundbreaking research organization studying human sexuality and gender. The Nazis, like other genocidal groups, believed that national strength and existential power could only be achieved through an imposition of a strict gender binary within the racially-pure "national community." A fundamentalist gender binary was a key feature of Nazi racial politics and genocide.

In the United States, the Republican Party has introduced a barrage of anti-transgender laws and policies in multiple states since 2016. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, there have been 286 anti-transgender bills introduced between January 1, 2021 and October 13, 2022. Most of the anti-trans bills that have been passed and signed into law across the country have to do with the eligibility of trans athletes to participate in school sports. Thankfully, many of the most dangerous bills have not been enacted into law (yet), including bill KS SB214 (Kansas Senate Bill 214), which criminalized gender reassignment surgery and hormone replacement therapy for minors, and MO HB2086 (Missouri House Bill 2086), a bill that would prohibit a person from changing their gender marker on their birth certificate. All these laws seek to create a society that is hostile to the very idea of trans identity and in which it is impossible to live openly and legally as a trans person.

It must be said that the reality of transgender identity cannot be challenged. Transgender people have existed throughout history. In many societies, particularly before Western colonial domination, social institutions existed to make room for trans people. Scientific research on sexual development has demonstrated the complexity of biological sex and the biological basis

for gender diversity. Furthermore, gender identity is a very private and subjective matter that engages with deeply felt realities and the social constructions that exist in society. It is a part of the process of human expression that is protected by universal human rights and the US Constitution, such as the right to life, liberty and security of person; equal protection of the law; the right to privacy; and the freedom of expression. Like other identities, gender identities outside of the narrow binary are legitimate and protected.

The gender critical movement, though it often claims scientific accuracy, is in fact ignoring the most rigorous and up-to-date science of sex and gender. Scientific research on gender diversity aligns with what we know about biological diversity more generally and challenges the fundamentalist binary concept of sex and gender differentiation.

The fundamentalist interpretation of gender and the obsession with the gender binary hurts all people who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes, not just transgender people, by imposing strict norms on human expression and experience through the use of shame and stigma. Scientific research has shown, in contrast, that supportive parents, schools, and communities, as well as gender-affirming health care, lead to improved mental health and life outcomes for trans people and therefore also for all the people who love and cherish them. All attempts to further marginalize and, indeed, to criminalize transgender identities contributes directly to the high level of societal violence that already exists against transgender people as well as to the high levels of mental and physical health challenges that exist within the transgender community, including suicide.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention points out that the gender critical movement is not about protecting women. It is about exacting control over the bodies of marginalized people and thrusting them outside of the community of moral obligation if they fail to conform to the norms of the gender that has been assigned to them by others. In other words, the gender critical movement seeks to control the deepest aspects of human experience and self-knowledge through genocidal aggressions against an historically marginalized and silenced community that has just begun to flourish and gain acceptance. The gender critical movement is a totalitarian and genocidal social force that targets not just transgender people, but also all the institutions of democracy that protect individual and collective human rights.

While members of the gender critical movement may argue that they do not seek to kill the physical bodies of transgender people, they do openly seek to eradicate transgender identity from the world, following a genocidal logic similar to the US, Canadian, and Australian boarding schools that sought to “kill the Indian, [and] save the man.” Once it becomes acceptable for one group of people to be criminalized for expressing their identity, then society becomes vulnerable to the genocidal targeting of other groups as well. In fact, anti-trans initiatives are closely tied to assaults on the rights of women, people of color, minority religious communities, and immigrants in the US and elsewhere. The criminalization and harassment of the trans community

can serve as a rehearsal for more generalized targeting of unwanted groups within a genocidal ideological structure. There is no shutting the floodgates once states and societies acquiesce to the eradication of a specific people from the earth.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention expressed solidarity with trans people across the globe. We urge every person around the world to think about the precedents that are being set with the level of stigma, organized hate, and legal control being advocated by voices within the gender critical movement. We ask people to choose to protect the human rights of human beings who do not fit easily into the simplistic gender binary. We ask people to question what agendas they are serving by supporting anti-trans hate speech and policy initiatives. We encourage everyone to support people in their efforts to live as the person they know that they are. We invite people to be open-minded and open-hearted and to learn about transgender experiences. The real challenges to human life, to safe and secure families, and to healthy communities are historical injustices and structural inequalities, not people attempting to live full lives in their true identities.