



April 4, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to bring urgent attention to the terrifying situation facing gay men in the Russian republic of Chechnya. According to numerous media outlets and human rights organizations, authorities there have rounded up dozens of men in the past month on suspicion of being gay, subjecting them to torture and humiliation, and killing at least three of them.

The Russian LGBT Network reports that they have received numerous requests for help in the last few weeks, and have established emergency hotlines for those who are facing threats, hoping to move them to safety.

Meanwhile, Chechen authorities have denied that such a “prophylactic purge” is occurring, with one government spokesman denying that there are even LGBT people in Chechnya at all, saying “you cannot arrest and repress those who simply aren’t in the republic.” Chillingly, he added “If there were such people in Chechnya, law-enforcement agencies wouldn’t need to have anything to do with them because their relatives would send them somewhere from which there is no returning.”

The Kremlin has dismissed these reports, saying that those who were suffering could “file official complaints and go to court,” avenues that are highly unlikely to yield positive results in a region without a strong track record in the rule of law.

I therefore write to urge you to make clear to your Russian counterparts that such lawless detentions, arrests, torture and murders are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. As you said during your Senate confirmation process, you believe in “a shared commitment to protect the human rights of all people, no matter who they are or whom they love” and that “means standing for universal human rights and fighting for the dignity of every person.”

This is a crucial moment to make it clear that the U.S. will indeed “work aggressively to advance human rights for everyone,” as you have said. The Chechen and Russian

governments must transparently account for those who have been detained, condemn and investigate the attacks, and ensure that those targeted can flee to safety. I urge you to press them on these concerns and to put into practice the human rights goals you set for yourself and your Department in your confirmation process.

My colleagues and I stand ready to assist you and your staff in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chad Griffin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Chad Griffin
President