



The Consequences of Trans Erasure: A Global Ripple Effect

Trump administration policies are an outright attack on the existence and humanity of transgender individuals.

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The recent executive orders issued by President Trump, along with ensuing actions taken by federal agencies, have set a dangerous precedent that threatens the fundamental rights and dignity of transgender people in the United States and beyond. These actions, including limitations on legal gender recognition, are not simply administrative decisions. They are an outright attack on the existence and humanity of transgender individuals, reinforcing stigma and emboldening discrimination in every sphere of life.

At the core of these policies is an insidious attempt to erase transgender people from legal and social recognition. By rolling back protections and rights for transgender individuals, the government signals that their lives and identities are expendable. This is not just a matter of bureaucratic oversight; it is an intentional and harmful strategy that has real-world consequences. When governments make categories of people invisible in policy, the effects ripple outward, making them more vulnerable to discrimination, exclusion, and violence.

For transgender individuals, the stakes are life-altering. Research has consistently shown that transgender people face disproportionately high rates of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, and barriers to accessing health care. The implementation of policies that deny them legal recognition only exacerbates these disparities. Without proper identification documents that reflect their gender identity, many transgender people are left vulnerable to discrimination in employment, housing, and education.

Equally alarming is the rollback of access to gender-affirming medical care. In several states, emboldened by these federal actions, lawmakers will move aggressively to restrict access to treatments that are essential for the well-being of transgender individuals. These attacks on health care not only deepen stigma but also lead to increased mental health struggles, including higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicidality among transgender youth.

The implications of these policies extend far beyond US borders. The United States has long played a role in shaping global human rights norms, and when it takes steps backward, it gives cover to other nations to do the same. Already, anti-trans rhetoric and policies are on the rise

worldwide. Countries that previously had limited legal protections for transgender individuals may now feel emboldened to pass even more repressive laws.

For instance, in some parts of Eastern Europe and Latin America, there has been a growing movement to ban gender-affirming medical care and legal gender recognition, often citing similar justifications to those being made in the United States. The proliferation of these policies threatens to undo years of progress and puts transgender lives at even greater risk, particularly in countries where violence against LGBTQ+ individuals is already alarmingly high.

The impact is not just governmental. Anti-trans rhetoric from political leaders fuels societal stigma, encouraging discrimination and violence at an individual level. Hate crimes against transgender people have been on the rise in the United States and many parts of the world, and anti-transgender policies and legislation that delegitimize the existence of the transgender community only makes it easier for such gender identity-motivated violence against an already vulnerable and marginalized community to go unchecked.

The fundamental truth remains: transgender people exist. No executive order, policy change, or political ideology can erase their humanity. They are part of our families, workplaces, communities, and societies. While laws may attempt to make them invisible, their lived experiences and contributions remain undeniable. Making people invisible in policy does not erase their humanity. Full stop.

We cannot allow this tide of discrimination and erasure to continue. We must stand in solidarity with transgender individuals, affirming their right to exist, to thrive, and to be seen. Injustice thrives in silence, but resistance is fueled by visibility and solidarity. Now is the time to speak up, to act, and to affirm the simple but powerful truth: transgender people are here and no government decree can change that reality.

This Zero HIV Stigma blog was written by Dr. José M. Zuniga, who is President/CEO of the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (@IAPAC) and the Fast-Track Cities Institute (@FTC2030).