LGBTQI RIGHTS INTERNATIONALLY. AS THE HARD Fought AND WON BATTLE FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN 2005 SIGNALLED A TURNING POINT IN LGBTQI RIGHTS, THE FOCUS OF MANY HAS TURNED TO THE SITUATION OF LGBTQI PEOPLE ABROAD WHO FACE VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION. IN 2006, A GROUP OF CONCERNED LGBTQI PEOPLE FROM CANADA WENT TO THE STREET AND MET WITH A PALESTINIAN YOUTH WHO LIVED ON THE STREETS. THEIR YOUTH'S PLEA INSPIRED THE GROUP TO HELP. THE RESULT WAS RAINBOW STATE SPONSORED HOMOPHOBIA AROUND THE WORLD, APPROXIMATELY 70 COUNTRIES HAVE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY LAWS, AND MANY MORE HAVE OTHER LAWS THAT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY. IN TOO MANY COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, LGBTQI PEOPLE ARE ROUTINELY ARRESTED, DENIED BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ARE BEING BRUTALLY ATTACKED, TORTURED OR EVEN MURDERED. THERE ARE A SMALL AMOUNT OF BRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS TRYING TO FIGHT FOR LGBTQI RIGHTS IN THESE COUNTRIES, PROVIDING A LIFELINE FOR SUPPORT. HOWEVER, FOR THOSE NOT ABLE TO GET ACCESS TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS, LIFE IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY IS UNBEARABLE. FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS, A PLANE TICKET ISSUED QUICKLY CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH. A CANADIAN SOLUTION TO A GLOBAL PROBLEM.
2017 was another transformational year for Rainbow Railroad. In 2016, we were endowed with an investment from the Upside Down Tree Foundation allowing us to scale up operations to help more people. We immediately went to work, establishing a three-year strategic plan that would steadily increase the number of people that we could help annually — starting with 100 people in 2017 — by April, we’d made significant gains towards our first-year goal.

Then, the crisis in Chechnya happened.

Like you, I was horrified when I first heard reports of hundreds of LGBTQI people being targeted by a state-sponsored campaign to entrap and torture gay and bisexual men. We decided to act after learning an organization managed to set up safe houses for those able to flee. I visited the region and interviewed people in hiding — like Khalid, whose story is highlighted in this report.

We didn’t realize the crisis would make international headlines. We just saw an opportunity to help.

Our response was possible thanks to the financial support of thousands of people around the world.

In 2017 we helped 206 people from 18 countries — double our original target. We also learned that Rainbow Railroad has the unique ability to intervene in crisis situations, which unfortunately continues to happen frequently.

So, where do we go from here? Was this unprecedented support a one-time event? Can we maintain this pace? Ultimately, our decisions are fuelled by the over 1,200 requests a year that keep climbing.

This is why, together, we must keep going — there are too many lives at risk.

Thank you for your support.
We are very proud that Rainbow Railroad, on behalf of our community, now takes its place among those movements. And we are equally proud to be part of a community that values the work we do and has supported us with generous financial aid and volunteer hours.

In light of our remarkable growth, our board and staff met late last year to map out a plan for the next few years. We were ambitious in charting goals to raise more funds so that we could respond faster and more effectively to LGBTQI people fleeing persecution. Your support has given us the confidence to be ambitious.

Given the growing extent of homophobic and transphobic persecution worldwide, it is easy to feel as if nothing can be done. But history teaches us otherwise.

We can point to more than 400 members of the LGBTQI community who found safety because of our efforts. These people are true heroes because they refuse to submit to prejudice and hate.

You give them hope.

Message from our Chair, Board of Directors

MICHAEL BATTISTA

THE IDEA BEHIND OUR WORK

is simple: help LGBTQI community members facing risk anywhere in the world by finding them a path to safety.

We are often congratulated for being pioneers when in fact there is nothing original in what we do.

Historically, a long tradition of movements have helped people escape persecution: the Underground Railroad, from which we took our name; the Sanctuary movement, and the many heroic acts performed during the Holocaust by people who risked their lives to help Jews and others at risk.

We are very proud that Rainbow Railroad, on behalf of our community, now takes its place among those movements. And we are equally proud to be part of a community that values the work we do and has supported us with generous financial aid and volunteer hours.

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You give them hope.
In 2017, LGBTQI Americans and their straight allies responded with an overwhelming groundswell of support by raising awareness and by donating and organizing events that helped draw thousands of people to the cause from coast to coast. We saw incredible acts of kindness in the wake of our intervention in Chechnya, among them a passionate supporter whose Facebook fundraiser raised over $250,000 from nearly 10,000 donors.

The history of the USA leading change in challenging times with passionate, action-focused movements such as ACT UP, ensures that once again the United States will be a viable option for LGBTQI people seeking safety because of state-sponsored persecution.

Rainbow Railroad teaches us that in an era where there is talk about building walls and fortifying borders, what’s clear is that Americans’ generosity and passion for liberty is still unbounded. From the LGBTQI person facing danger, to the human rights defenders on the ground, to the donors who contribute, to the people who help resettle newcomers — we’re more connected than ever before.
2006 Created by a dedicated group of volunteers.

2013 Became a registered charitable organization in Canada

2016 Received transformational grant from Upside Down Tree Foundation and provided travel support for over 200 individuals since 2006

2017 Helped provide a pathway to safety for 57 Chechens and a total of 206 individuals

2017 Rainbow Railroad has assisted over 400 people with emergency travel support, to date, and is on track for helping over 200 people this year

2018 Rainbow Railroad has assisted over 400 people with emergency travel support, to date, and is on track for helping over 200 people this year

2015 Actual
People Helped: 29
Annual Budget: $322,763

2016 Actual
People Helped: 81
Annual Budget: $855,734

2017 Goal
People Helped: 100
Annual Budget: $1,100,000

2017 Actual
People Helped: 206
Annual Budget: $2,039,068

2018 Goal
People Helped: 250
Annual Budget: $2,600,000
Requests by Nationality

1151 REQUESTS FROM 34 COUNTRIES

- Russia: 100
  - Chechnya & Dagestan: 70
  - Other Russians: 30
- Syria: 74
- Uganda: 62
- Nigeria: 61
- Pakistan: 35
- Iraq: 32
- Egypt: 27

Number of Requests

- 301-400
- 51-100
- 21-50
- 6-20
- 1-5
- 0

Countries: Jamaica 369, Other Caribbean 16, Haiti 11, Brazil 8, Honduras 6, 101-400: 51-100: 21-50: 6-20: 1-5: 0
I Grew Up in Barbados. It is a beautiful island nation. But it has a dark side. From about the age of nine, I realized that I was different than others. When I turned 16, my mom passed away, and life began to get way more difficult for me as an LGBTQI person. I ran away from home and ended up living on the streets. It was rough!

I was constantly discriminated against because of the way I dressed. One time, I was hit by a car, on purpose, to make me feel afraid of living.

When I tried to rent an apartment, the landlady said she wouldn’t take me as a tenant because kids lived in the area and a person like me shouldn’t be allowed to live near children. This constant abuse really took its toll on me.

I was constantly discriminated against because of the way I dressed.

After connecting with Rainbow Railroad, I had new hope that there could be a way out. Rainbow Railroad worked out the details for me to leave in August 2017.

When I got on a plane for the first time, and arrived in the UK, it was overwhelming! I’d never been around so many people. I was linked with people and resources to help me deal with the depression and anxiety that was so bad.

In November, I had a formal interview to process my claim for asylum. Today, I have safe housing, am receiving medical care and therapy, and can actually dream of finding a woman to be my wife. I’m so grateful to the team at Rainbow Railroad for making this possible.
The couple met in Syria and managed to keep their relationship a secret, Mazen says. “Gay is illegal there. So we stayed hidden. We pretended to be just friends, never together in public.”

“We decided to leave so we can live our life and be together. Although it was extremely difficult to leave their families, they made the decision to get out of Syria. ‘There was nothing for us there. We have no rights. We are always in danger. So we decided to leave so we can live our life and be together.’

When they were connected to a Rainbow Railroad Private Sponsorship Team, they got a call from their team who told them there was an apartment waiting for them in Toronto. “There were ten people on the team, and they were all waiting at the airport holding a welcome sign in Arabic when we arrived,” Mazen says.

“We are all still friends, even though the sponsorship is done. We are family. They are all so great.”

Mazen and Tarek say they are so grateful to Rainbow Railroad for making it possible for them to have a life together.

When the couple arrived in Toronto from war-torn Syria in 2016, Toronto’s Pride festivities were in full swing. Two years later, now safe and happy together downtown, the couple recall the glorious moment they arrived in Canada thanks to Rainbow Railroad.

“It was such an amazing time to arrive here. Everything was so beautiful,” Tarek says. “We came from a place where we were closeted, to here, in Canada, where gay people are completely open and walking around.”

Private Sponsorship: Escape from Syria

Mazen & Tarek

When they arrived in 2016, everything was so beautiful. They were all waiting at the airport holding a welcome sign in Arabic when they arrived.

“We are still friends, even though the sponsorship is done. We are family. They are all so great.”

Mazen and Tarek say they are so grateful to Rainbow Railroad for making it possible for them to have a life together.
I was paranoid about everything. I couldn’t be certain that it wasn’t some kind of trick; if the people helping me were somehow working with the police.

Toronto, a welcoming city, where my sexual orientation doesn’t matter. I’m free!

“Tell them I’m free! I’m able to live my life. I’m so thankful to be able to live in Toronto, a welcoming city, where my sexual orientation doesn’t matter. I’m free!”

Rainbow Railroad was able to bring 57 Chechens to safety, many arriving in Canada.

“Rainbow Railroad arranged for my transportation and upon arrival I have received support from COSTI Immigrant Services and been connected with The 519, and these organizations have been key to helping me thrive as a newcomer. I have safe housing, I’m learning English, working part-time, and enrolled in a program studying marketing. Please let everyone know I’m so grateful for their help!”

THE WORLD BEGAN TO HEAR about the horror that was unfolding in Chechnya through news reports by Elena Milashina and her colleague Irina Gordienko in Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta in April 2017. After weeks of investigating and gaining the trust of sources, the journalists uncovered evidence that gay men were being detained, tortured, and even killed in an anti-homosexual purge. Rainbow Railroad immediately leapt into action, partnering with the Russian LGBT Network, which had set up safe houses in Russia for people who managed to escape. “It was the most stressful time,” Khalid said.
As a lesbian from Georgia, one of the Russian Caucuses, Lily followed reports of the crackdown closely, and was surprised to find that Rainbow Railroad was based in Toronto.

“I wanted to help. So I contacted Rainbow Railroad and offered to translate.”

“I’m so proud to have acted as an interpreter for all the Chechen refugees that came to Canada. I’m also so grateful for everyone who supports Rainbow Railroad, which makes it possible for them to do this important work.”

Given the chaos in the world today, and the rise of right-wing movements around the world, which often manifest in very homophobic ways, Rainbow Railroad is a triage point for people.

There were even reports of Chechen police instructing parents to kill their own LGBTQI children and dispose of the bodies or the authorities would do it for them, according to survivor stories.

“How do you navigate that kind of society as a gay person?” she asks. “There’s no way to escape.”
In 2017, Rainbow Railroad’s strategic advocacy and network-building allowed us to be more responsive than ever to LGBTQI requests for aid.

Our three-year strategic plan, finalized in January 2017, provides a thorough overview of Rainbow Railroad’s commitment to develop our organization’s internal processes. The strategic plan has allowed us to identify the new tools we require in order to grow as an organization, build up our resources to address our needs, and help as many people as possible escape persecution.

The plan ensures that our organization’s exponential expansion continues, and allows us to build upon our established connections within our organization and community to create lasting resources in order to help more people.

### STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. **Deepen**
   - Reach New People
   - Current Services

2. **Expand**
   - Reach New People
   - With New Tools

3. **Build**
   - The Capacity to Meet the Organization’s Needs

### 2017 ARRIVALS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbados</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chechnya</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>206</td>
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</table>
So we hosted a fundraiser here last year. Kimahli and two survivors came to speak, and it was so heartfelt for everyone here. We like to connect our clients and vendors to things we’re interested in. Most people have no idea. They’re shocked to hear the situation for gay people in other countries. When people hear about the work that Rainbow Railroad does — the basis for that work — they’re appalled and horrified. Most people have no idea.

**We both feel so lucky.** We came from loving families and it wasn’t a big deal. We didn’t have big hardships compared to that, and because we’re successful, we can set a positive example and help. Rainbow Railroad is a cause that is really dear to our hearts. Here is a grassroots organization making a difference, doing incredible work.

George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg are international design stars based in Toronto.
To bring LGBTQI people to safety, we continue to partner with institutions that recognize the intersection of civil and human rights, equality and health care. In this shared space, we are making the world a safer place.

Their philanthropy and partnership allow us to address the shocking discrimination.

EJAF knows all too well that homophobia and transphobia fuel the HIV epidemic. And, tragically, parts of the Caribbean remain some of the most homophobic and transphobic places in the world. Identification as LGBTQI or as an HIV+ person significantly increases an individual’s risk of death. Moreover, this risk often means violent death by state-sponsored assassination, mob violence, or preventable deaths due to discrimination and lack of access to life-saving treatment.

We are thankful to EJAF for their relentless, compassionate, and strategic philanthropy, which enabled Rainbow Railroad to assist people in danger in 2017.

AS A LEADING HIV FUNDER, the Elton John AIDS Foundation (EJAF) is strongly committed to responding to the changing needs of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. We couldn’t be more grateful to be recognized by EJAF. In 2017, EJAF renewed their grant support to Rainbow Railroad to $75,000 USD. Their philanthropy and partnership allow us to address the shocking discrimination and barriers experienced by LGBTQI people in the Caribbean.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Canada 2017</th>
<th>USA 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td>$2,039,068</td>
<td>$694,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
<td>$1,884,346</td>
<td>$347,258</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Donations</td>
<td>$1,095,521</td>
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<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>$39,862</td>
<td>$6,956</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deferred &amp; Other</td>
<td>$181,407</td>
<td>$2,989</td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Programming</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$327,715</td>
<td>$347,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating &amp; Admin</td>
<td>$140,647</td>
<td>$21,404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$154,722 surplus currently used to support helping more people in 2019

$347,551 surplus currently used to support helping more people in 2018
CANADIAN DONATIONS

$100,000+
Rainbow Railroad USA
Upside Down Tree
Elton John AIDS Foundation
Glenn Pushelberg
George Yabu
$25,000-$49,999
Adam4Adam
Andrew Beckerman
Daniel McCarthy
Steven Spencer
B.C.F. LLP
Unifor
Dean & Jamie Powers

$5,000-$9,999
R. Todd Appleton
Lawrence Berlinski
Robert L. Brevis
Ed & Margaret DaCosta
Andrew Delamere
Anthony & Maria DiPede
Ross Dobson
David Dubrovsky
Andrew Grimes
Group of Five
James Robertson Art Consultants Inc.
Martha McCain
Ian Northcote
Barry Plant
Pride & Remembrance Foundation
Lauren Richardson
Allan Rowe & Bryan Blenkins
Ashleigh Shier
Karen Somerville
Andrew Swart
TELUS
Christopher Wallace & Jeff Fettes

$1,000-$4,999
Sachin Aggarwal
Arshad Ahmeduddin
Gary Akrehead
Connie & Dave Anderson
Wesley Andrews
John Andru
Laure Armin
Blake Avery
Timothy Banks & Farrell
Macdonald
Michael & Keith Batista
BCLEU
Guy Beaudin
Randolph Boyd
Brian Brenik
Shaun Brodie
Dwight Burgay
Minh Thien Cao
Centre for Newcomers
John Clifford
Jamieson Cohan
Russell Connelly
David Crawford
Cress & Tangis
The Cultch: Vancouver East
Cultural Centre
Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg LLP
Randall Dawson & Rudy Tizcan
Amada Di Pronicario
Bruno Duarte
Anthony Dunn
Eastside Flea Inc.

THE EDITH LANDO CHARITABLE FOUNDATION
Ann Erskine
Sarah Evks
Face to Face Games
Daniel Flanagan
Pinky Franklin
Joseph Gagliano
Romen Gagnon
Kevin Goddard
Caleb Goodman
Benjamin Haymen
Benaie Hopworth
Horizon
Larry Hughson
William Hunter
Peter Huser

THANK YOU FOR SAVING LIVES
$1,000-$4,999
Frank Lowery
Richard Lyle
Manchester Leatherman
Carole Marshall
Donald McCulloch
Bob McKinnon
Jordan Merkur
Mark Michaud
Adrian Mitchell
David Moore
Adam Morrison
Deborah Moss
Michael Murphy
Lauren Nackman
Rosanna Nardi
John Nelson
Larry Nevad
Byron Pearl &
Stefan Weigang
Ralph Phillips
Mark Pratt
Pride Toronto
Eileen Pusheberg
Shane A.N. Raman
Luke Randall
RBC Foundation
Jeffrey Richter
Robert Ruggiero
E Ann Sackleyer
Charity Safford
Savannah Scott-Leslie
Rupen Serai
Ross Slater & Wayne Smith
Steve & Shannon Small
Blake Smith
William Starchi
Brock Stevenson
Jeff Sturge
StoryBundle
Dale Sturgis
Sol Sujia
TD
The Mcgrane-Pearson
Endowment Fund
Alex Timmorth
Alli Timmorth & Dianne Davis
John Toew
Stephen Traynor
& Alexander Reda
Hilde Tucker
Ian Turner
Gaby Van Der Velde
Mai-Lin Vettraino
Ronald Wakefield
Mordechai Wasserman
Bernice Watson
Glen Watson
Richard Willett
Mark Wilson
Nora Young
Darrel Zehf
Jenna Zuschlag Misener
XE.com Inc

$100,000+
Network for Good
$25,000-$49,999
Broadway Cares / Equity Fights AIDS
$10,000-$24,999
Andrew Beckerman
Walter Cain
Fantastic Natural Cosmetics Ltd
Mel Heifetz
The Points Guy
Leather Community of Europe
Schwab Charitable
Tirdof Fund
Andrew D. Zacks Foundation
Jamie Drake
Milan Patel
Nadine James
Philip Knoll
David Lapham & Clark Mitchell
Peter Lyons
Charity Parrish
Mark Purpura
The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence

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**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

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| Sandi Baker             | Manager of Finance      |
| Winnie Luk              | Managing Director       |
| Devon Matthews          | Manager of Program Development |
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| Jay Girishman           | Graphic Designer        |
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Osama Al Fakih
Yassine Derraz
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Africa Team
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Riad Al-Haik
Nassim Al-Amin
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Sebastian Constantino

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Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers, partners and most importantly case individuals who make this work possible.
LGBTQI PEOPLE ABROAD WHO FACE VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION. IN 2006, A GROUP OF CONCERNED LGBTQI PEOPLE FROM CANADA WENT TO WORLD PRIDE IN TEL AVIV AND MET WITH A PALESTINIAN YOUTH WHO LIVED ON THE STREETS. THIS YOUTH'S PLIGHT INSPIRED THE GROUP TO HELP. THE RESULT WAS RAINBOW STATE SPONSORED HOMOPHOBIA AROUND THE WORLD AROUND THE WORLD, APPROXIMATELY 70 COUNTRIES HAVE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY LAWS, AND MANY MORE HAVE OTHER LAWS THAT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY. IN TOO MANY COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, LGBTQI PEOPLE ARE ROUTINELY ARRESTED, DENIED BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ARE BEING BRUTALLY ATTACKED, TORTURED OR EVEN MURDERED. THERE ARE A SMALL AMOUNT OF BRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS TRYING TO FIGHT FOR LGBTQI RIGHTS IN THESE COUNTRIES, PROVIDING A LIFELINE FOR SUPPORT. HOWEVER, FOR THOSE NOT ABLE TO GET ACCESS TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS, LIFE IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY IS UNBEARABLE. FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS, A PLANE TICKET ISSUED QUICKLY CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

FOR OVER 50 YEARS, CANADA HAS BEEN A HUMANITARIAN ACTOR ON THE WORLD STAGE AND HAS BECOME A LEADER ON LGBTQI RIGHTS INTERNATIONALLY. AS THE HARD FOUGHT AND WON BATTLE FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN 2005 SIGNALLED A TURNING POINT IN LGBTQI RIGHTS, THE FOCUS OF MANY HAS TURNED TO THE SITUATION OF LGBTQI PEOPLE ABROAD WHO FACE VIOLENCE AND PERSECUTION. IN 2006, A GROUP OF CONCERNED LGBTQI PEOPLE FROM CANADA WENT TO WORLD PRIDE IN TEL AVIV AND MET WITH A PALESTINIAN YOUTH WHO LIVED ON THE STREETS. THIS YOUTH'S PLIGHT INSPIRED THE GROUP TO HELP. THE RESULT WAS RAINBOW STATE SPONSORED HOMOPHOBIA AROUND THE WORLD AROUND THE WORLD, APPROXIMATELY 70 COUNTRIES HAVE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY LAWS, AND MANY MORE HAVE OTHER LAWS THAT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY. IN TOO MANY COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, LGBTQI PEOPLE ARE ROUTINELY ARRESTED, DENIED BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ARE BEING BRUTALLY ATTACKED, TORTURED OR EVEN MURDERED. THERE ARE A SMALL AMOUNT OF BRAVE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS TRYING TO FIGHT FOR LGBTQI RIGHTS IN THESE COUNTRIES, PROVIDING A LIFELINE FOR SUPPORT. HOWEVER, FOR THOSE NOT ABLE TO GET ACCESS TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS, LIFE IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY IS UNBEARABLE. FOR THESE INDIVIDUALS, A PLANE TICKET ISSUED QUICKLY CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

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