

Canada, Germany move to ban gay ‘conversion therapy’ — Canadian bill is so broad it could outlaw Christian counseling and evangelism of LGBT people

Does it go too far?

The Canadian and German governments have taken significant steps toward ending controversial gay “conversion therapy” practices in their countries this week.

Germany bans conversion therapy for minors

German Chancellor Angela Merkel’s spokesman, Steffen Seibert, announced the new ban for minors Wednesday, telling reporters the practice, which intends to make patients heterosexual, has no scientific basis and often causes psychological harm.

“The government’s goal is to protect people’s right to sexual self-determination,” Seibert added.

According to The Associated Press, in a Facebook post titled, “Homosexuality is not an illness,” the German government said anyone violating the ban could face punishments ranging from fines to prison.

Canada moves to criminalize any attempts to change one’s sexual orientation

In a mandate letter setting out his government’s policy objectives Tuesday, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau instructed his attorney general to “amend the *Criminal Code* to ban the practice of conversion therapy” and take other necessary steps “to end conversion therapy in Canada.”

Trudeau's directive comes just one week after Bill S-202 was introduced in Canadian Parliament aiming to make punishable by up to five years imprisonment the act of knowingly advertising or material benefitting, whether directly or indirectly, from conversion therapy practices.

According to the bill, conversion therapy means "any practice, treatment or service designed to change an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity or to eliminate or reduce sexual attraction or sexual behavior between persons of the same sex."

The bill's broad definition of 'conversion therapy' could put Christians in danger

Critics of the Canadian bill point to how broad and sweeping the language of the bill reads and say it is a strike against religious liberty. They fear that many various attempts by Christians to help LGBT people change could be considered or eventually become punishable by law.

The broad definition could include "Christian counseling, prayer, and evangelism directed at the LGBT community," David Cooke, campaign manager for Canadian pro-life organization Campaign Life, suggested to LifeSite News.

"In other words, if you publicly proclaim ('advertise') the message that homosexuals can be saved and changed, you will go to prison," he added. "And if a young homosexual (under age 18) is converted at your church and starts contributing to the offering (providing a financial 'benefit'), your church leadership will go to prison."

LifeSite News notes that Campaign Life has launched a petition against the bill, calling it "absurd and totalitarian" to jail people for "helping someone overcome unwanted same-sex attractions or gender dysphoria."

Conversion therapy is a controversial issue

Unhelpful to Campaign Life's cause is the present and historical controversy surrounding conversion therapy practices.

The Human Rights Campaign categorizes conversion therapy as "a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual

orientation or gender identity or expression” that can “lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide.”

The American Psychological Association has taken a less dogmatic stance, offering simply that “there is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation.”

While many Christian and conservative organizations have distanced themselves from the practice, some argue that “while there is no doubt that some people have been hurt” by certain since-discontinued conversion therapy practices — such as electric shock treatment — there is also “no doubt that the harm has been exaggerated.”

To date, conversion therapy for minors has been banned in 18 U.S. states.

Source:

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