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WORLD

Pope Francis Says Criminalizing Homosexuality Is Wrong

The pontiff said the church should work for the repeal of laws punishing homosexuality



Pope Francis discussed homosexuality during an interview with the Associated Press at the Vatican.
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By *Francis X. Rocca* [Follow](#)

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ROME—Pope Francis said that laws punishing homosexuality are unfair and that the Catholic Church should work for their repeal.

The statement, in an interview with the Associated Press published on Wednesday, is the latest in a series of conciliatory gestures by Pope Francis toward gay people.

He said that more than 50 countries have laws against homosexuality and that some of them prescribe the death penalty. “I think it’s unfair,” he said. “Being gay is not a crime. It is a human condition,” the pope said.

“We are all children of God and God loves us as we are,” the pope said, echoing earlier comments, including his famous 2013 statement about gay priests: “Who am I to judge?”

Pope Francis, who has expressed support for some gay civil unions, made it clear

Pope Francis, who has expressed support for same-sex civil unions, made it clear in the interview that he wasn't changing church teaching on the morality of homosexual acts.

"Being homosexual is not a crime. It is not a crime. Yes, but it's a sin. Well, first let's distinguish sin from crime," the pope said.

A number of countries in the Muslim world and in Africa have laws against homosexuality, sometimes supported by local Catholic bishops. The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference in 2021 expressed its "unflinching support" for a proposed law that would impose prison sentences to punish gay sex.

The Vatican has said previously that homosexuality shouldn't carry criminal penalties, though Catholic teaching forbids homosexual acts. Pope Francis' latest comments are the first time that a pontiff has spoken out against antigay laws.

The pope said that bishops who support such laws, "although they are good bishops, are part of the culture and some still have their minds in that culture." Such bishops must go through a "conversion process," the pope said.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, an authoritative compendium of doctrine, says that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered" and "under no circumstances can they be approved." But it also says that people with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies...must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided."

In 2008, the Vatican opposed a United Nations resolution calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality, arguing that the resolution was too sweeping and could be used to pressure countries to legalize same-sex marriage. But a Vatican spokesman said at the time that "no one wants the death penalty or jail or fines for homosexuals."

In 2021, the pope approved publication of a decree forbidding the blessing of same-sex relationships, on the grounds that God "cannot bless sin."

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