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Global Queer Activism: Challenges and Opportunities for LGBTQIA+ Social Justice in times of Backlash

Thursday 4 June 2026 10:45 (1h 30m)

This roundtable brings together queer scholars from the Global North and South with area expertise in South Africa, Nigeria, East Asia, the Middle East, South America, North America and the UK, to discuss the urgent and emerging challenges and opportunities for queer activists and academics committed to social justice for LGBTQIA+ communities. Queer struggles and communities have long been sidelined by gentrified forms of LGBTQIA+ advocacy, often located and expressed at mainstream, commercialised Pride events, by business advocates and in normative rights terms, such as same sex marriage. The rise of transnational anti-gender and homophobic political forces have led to a significant backlash against LGBTQIA+ rights and a shift in homonationalist discourses returning to forms of homophobic authoritarianism. The reduction of international development spending and the resurgence of traditional security priorities directly threaten queer security. The cancellation of USAID and PEPFAR funding have had exacting and negative impacts on LGBTQIA+ communities in the Global South. Transnational homophobic advocacy, directed by transnational Christian and pro-family groups in the Global North, has encouraged a rollback of LGBTQIA+ rights in a number of Global South locations. Evolving forms of homocapitalism, with a retreat of commercial sponsors at Pride events and the cancellation of EDI programmes by many big businesses, creates dilemmas for LGBTQIA+ organisers and advocates. This roundtable will explore these global dynamics and what they mean for theories of homonationalism, homocapitalism, 'Pink Washing' and diversity politics. Furthermore, the panel will highlight cutting edge queer research and discuss the emerging priorities, needs and responses that we, as socially and politically committed researchers, should chart in the face of these challenging times.

Track Classification: Gendering International Relations Working Group