

Motion to the Recovery Dharma Global Board

Regarding inclusive location selection for annual Summits

Submitted to: Recovery Dharma Global Board of Directors

Date: 30th April 2026

For consideration at: 2026 Annual Board Meeting

Background and Context

The 2026 Recovery Dharma Global Summit is scheduled to take place in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, from 16-19 July 2026. This is an in-person-only event. Whilst we celebrate the dedication of the organising committee, we respectfully submit that the choice of location and format raises serious concerns about accessibility, inclusion, and alignment with our stated values as an organisation.

Recovery Dharma Global's Statement Against Oppression of All Kinds declares: 'We, the sangha of the Recovery Dharma Board of Directors, stand against all forms of oppression and exclusion of members of our community. We commit to taking tangible and concrete action to support the inclusion of all members of this worldwide sangha.' This motion seeks to honour that commitment by examining how our summit location choices affect our community's ability to participate.

The Problem: Barriers to Entry and Participation

Many members of our global sangha face significant, often insurmountable, barriers to entering the United States. Unlike previous years, disabled and other excluded community members cannot join the Recovery Dharma Global Summit virtually: the 2026 Summit is an in-person-only event, with no online or hybrid option.

1. Criminal Records and Past Conduct

The United States maintains strict entry requirements based on criminal history. Many countries apply similar restrictions, but the particular paradox here is acute: Recovery Dharma serves individuals in recovery from addiction, and the very histories our sangha exists to heal from - past drug-related offences, driving whilst impaired, minor public order offences, or even arrests without conviction - can result in denied entry. Offences considered spent in a member's home country must still be disclosed. For a community rooted in recovery, this creates a cruel contradiction: our shared past becomes a barrier to our shared gathering.

2. Travel Bans Targeting Black-Majority and Brown-Majority Nations

The Trump administration has implemented sweeping travel restrictions that fall disproportionately - and we believe deliberately - on nations whose populations are predominantly Black, Brown, Muslim, or from the Global South. The current restrictions include:

Full entry bans: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen.

Partial restrictions: Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela.

Reports indicate that this list is being expanded to over 38 countries. The pattern is not incidental. The countries subject to these bans are overwhelmingly Muslim-majority, African, or from the Caribbean and Global South. For members of our sangha from these nations, the United States is simply not an accessible host country for a gathering that calls itself global.

A coalition of 23 US-based immigrant rights organisations has submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council in preparation for the Universal Periodic Review of the United States, arguing that the US violates the human rights of non-citizens through mass detention, denial of due process, abusive and discriminatory policing, and suppression of civic space. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, stated in January 2026 that numerous US migration policies are resulting in arbitrary and unlawful arrests and detentions, and expressed concern that enforcement actions often lack sufficient individualised assessments.

3. Discrimination Against LGBTQ2S+ Community Members and International Travel Advisories

The Trump administration's discriminatory passport and border policies create serious and documented dangers for transgender, non-binary, and intersex community members:

- Executive orders require passports to reflect 'sex at birth' only, eliminating 'X' gender markers.
- Transgender individuals may receive passports with incorrect gender markers that do not match their identity or their documents from other countries.
- US visa applications must reflect 'biological sex at birth', even when this conflicts with the applicant's legal identity documents from their country of residence.
- These policies force transgender, non-binary, and intersex people to carry documents that out them against their will, increasing the risk of harassment, denial of entry, and violence.
- The ACLU and other civil liberties organisations have described these policies as discriminatory and state they push transgender, non-binary, and intersex people out of public life.

The consequences at the border are real and severe. Jane Fae, Director of the organisation TransActual, has stated: “... confiscation of your passport and indefinite detention in an ICE facility is a real possibility for trans people attempting to enter the United States.”

In response, a significant and growing number of governments have issued formal LGBTQIA+ travel advisories warning their citizens against travelling to the United States. The countries that have now issued such advisories include: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Spain, Italy, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Ireland, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The United Nations has also weighed in directly. Canadian immigration lawyers and travel agents are advising citizens to exercise caution, carry full documentation, and even consider using a separate device when travelling, as US immigration officers are now routinely inspecting phones and laptops and downloading data from them.

For our LGBTQ2S+ sangha members, attending a summit in the United States may mean forced disclosure of gender identity in ways that compromise safety, dignity, and privacy - or that result in detention, deportation, or worse.

4. Additional Vulnerable Populations

Beyond the specific restrictions above, other community members face barriers:

- Individuals who have publicly criticised US policies or the current administration may be denied entry under provisions targeting those who 'espouse hateful ideologies'.
- People with mental health histories may face additional scrutiny, as alcohol-related offences can be categorised as evidence of a mental health disorder in US immigration assessments.
- Financial barriers: international travel to the United States is prohibitively expensive for many sangha members, particularly those from the Global South.
- Physical barriers: disabled people may find long-haul international travel, and in-person-only events in general, inaccessible - particularly in the absence of a virtual participation option.
- Several members of Recovery Dharma are afraid to raise these concerns publicly, precisely because they fear that doing so could itself be used against them at a US border crossing.

5. Ethical Objections and Boycott Movements

Beyond the practical barriers to entry, many people throughout the world are participating in #BoycottUSA on ethical grounds. Even those who might be able to enter the United States unimpeded believe that travelling there and contributing financially to its economy conflicts with their principles.

For these sangha members, attending a summit in the USA would mean:

- Supporting a system that oppresses marginalised communities both domestically and globally.
- Contributing financially to policies and practices they view as causing immense suffering.
- Compromising their own ethical stance against systems of oppression.
- Acting in ways that conflict with their understanding of Right Action (Samma Kammanta) and non-harm.

These concerns are particularly salient for a Buddhist community committed to non-harm and to standing against oppression.

Conflict with Buddhist and Recovery Dharma Principles

This situation presents a fundamental conflict with core Buddhist principles and Recovery Dharma's expressed values:

- Right Action (Samma Kammanta)
- Loving-kindness (Metta)
- Compassion (Karuna)
- Equanimity (Upekkha)
- Non-discrimination

The Hybrid and Virtual Alternative

Recovery Dharma meetings have successfully operated online throughout the pandemic and continue to thrive in virtual formats. A robust hybrid option for the 2026 Summit could have been entirely achievable, and its absence is itself a choice that compounds the exclusion of those who cannot attend in person. Recovery Dharma members report that they have volunteered to help host a virtual alternative but their requests to get involved have been ignored.

The Harm of Silence: A Request for Honest Acknowledgement

Recovery Dharma has rightly committed itself to acknowledging the Buddhist and South and Southeast Asian cultural heritage from which our teachings arise. Many sanghas also observe land acknowledgements as an expression of that same commitment to inclusion and the recognition of historical and ongoing harm.

We ask the RDG Board to consider, honestly, whether that commitment has been applied consistently.

Each time the 2026 Annual Summit has been promoted, using the slogan “Kindness in Action: Connect, Serve, Grow”, it is promoted to a global community that includes trans and non-binary members, and members from Muslim-majority countries, who cannot safely enter the United States. Most face not only the bureaucratic harm of exclusion but genuine risk. Many members of Recovery Dharma are afraid to raise this publicly for exactly that reason.

Their hurt is real. RDG's silence compounds it.

To promote the Summit without acknowledgement of this exclusion has not been a neutral act. It has been a choice made by RDG Board members. And it sits in uncomfortable tension with the values our organisation claims to hold.

We again invite RDG Board members to consider a simple test. If the Summit were being held in a country that barred entry to people of a particular racial or ethnic background, would board members feel comfortable promoting it - without qualification or acknowledgement of the harm caused - in the WhatsApp group of a BIPOC sangha? Most of us know the answer. Board members were asked to hold our

trans and non-binary members, and our members from Muslim-majority countries, to the same standard of care. We were ignored. In its defence Board members have boasted of its inclusion, citing that (two) scholarships are available for this year's Summit in Charlotte, NC USA; this is seen as paltry compensation given the exclusion taking place.

We are not asking for a political statement. We are asking for what we already ask of ourselves in other contexts: honest acknowledgement of exclusion and harm, and a genuine expression of regret. All that is asked is a few honest words, each time the Summit is mentioned, that name the hurt and express genuine regret that many members of our community are denied the right and the freedom to participate in this year's Summit.

We respectfully request that the Recovery Dharma Global Board of Directors adopt the following policy:

1. All future Recovery Dharma Global annual summits shall include a robust hybrid or fully accessible virtual participation option.
2. The Board shall not host future annual summits in countries with immigration policies that create systematic barriers to entry for significant portions of our community, including but not limited to travel bans targeting Black-majority and Brown-majority nations, and policies that endanger LGBTQ2S+ members.
3. The Board shall prioritise summit locations in countries with inclusive immigration policies, and additionally, emphasise virtual and hybrid formats that are accessible to all.
4. The Board shall form an open and transparent Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility committee - which embraces and welcomes participation - to develop clear guidelines for future summit planning, with explicit consideration of immigration barriers, LGBTQ2S+ safety, disability access, and the equalities implications of host country selection.
6. The Board shall, each time the 2026 Summit is promoted or discussed in community spaces, and at the actual event, include an honest acknowledgement that not all members of the global sangha are able to attend, and express genuine regret for the exclusion and harm this causes.

Conclusion

Recovery Dharma exists to support all beings in recovery, regardless of their past, their identity, their nationality, or their circumstances. So many people in our sangha cannot attend this year's Recovery Dharma Global Summit. Their absence is not incidental. It is the direct result of choices that can still be addressed.

May all beings be free. May all beings find refuge. May all beings heal together.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan T, Rainbow RD, Pt/Eng LGBTQIA+ Allies RD, Zoom

