



CONGRESSIONAL
LGBT EQUALITY CAUCUS

COUNTRY UPDATE: UGANDA

January 17, 2014

Dear Friend:

As Co-Chair of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus and a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and because we share an interest in human rights around the world, I write to update you on the challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals in other countries.

As you know, across the world members of the **LGBT community face some of the most horrific human rights violation being reported today**. Over seventy countries and territories criminalize same-sex activity, with varied punishments including imprisonment, forced labor, forced psychiatric treatment, corporal punishment, banishment, and the death penalty. LGBT individuals around the world face homelessness, harassment, persecution, exclusion from society, lack of access to medical care, and a variety of other challenges, simply for being who they are. Despite these continued difficulties, in many countries LGBT communities are celebrating their first Pride events and governments are improving laws regarding the equal rights of LGBT people. I hope you will join me in supporting the fight for full equality around the world.

Uganda, a country in Africa's Great Lakes Region with a population of just over 35 million, and a former British Colony, has been in the news for a number of years due to a push by some in the Ugandan Parliament to pass legislation enhancing an existing law which criminalizes consensual same-sex relations to include the death penalty. This legislation passed last month, although the provision to "kill the gays" (as it has become known) was removed prior to its passage. **Although President Museveni recently indicated that he does not intend to sign the legislation, the situation in Uganda for LGBT individuals remains grave.**

- As passed, the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act would impose life in prison for consensual same-sex relations and harsh penalties on LGBT persons and those who speak out about the experiences and rights of LGBT individuals. This egregious law could trap people working in public health to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, and many others.
- Although President Museveni expressed opposition to the bill, he reportedly reasoned that "economic rehabilitation" and other tactics would be more effective than prison to "rescue" LGBT individuals.
- In 2010, a local tabloid printed the names and photographs of allegedly LGBT individuals, calling for their deaths. One local activist, David Kato, was subsequently murdered and other activists were forced to go into hiding.
- In 2012, a Ugandan news station broadcast a video of a transgender individual being physically harassed and humiliated at a police station and out in public in the nation's capital. Authorities did not file charges against the police officers; they later released the individual without charge.

Below you will find an in-depth fact-sheet on LGBT individuals in Uganda that I hope will be useful.

Sincerely,

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



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LGBT individuals in Nigeria face enormous challenges, and its population is considered one of the most homophobic in the world. According to a Pew Global Attitudes Project, 97 percent of Nigerians believe that homosexuality is a way of life that society should not accept, the second-highest rate of non-acceptance in the 45 countries surveyed. Nigeria is a largely conservative country split between a mainly Muslim north and a largely Christian south. Laws criminalizing both male and female consensual same-sex relations in both regions are among the harshest in the world, including death by stoning in the Muslim north.

INTENSE CRIMINALIZATION OF LGBT PERSONS

According to reports, in addition to refusing to recognize the legality of any same-sex relationship, the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill would:

- make a person who enters into a same sex marriage contract or civil union liable for 14 years' imprisonment, and make a person or group of persons that "witness, abet and aid the solemnization of a same sex marriage or civil union" liable for 10 years' imprisonment;
- prohibit the registration of "gay clubs, societies and organizations, their sustenance, processions and meetings" and make a person or group of persons that "supports the registration, operation and sustenance of gay clubs, societies, organizations, processions or meetings in Nigeria" liable for 10 years' imprisonment;
- make a person who "registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organization, or directly or indirectly make public show of same sex amorous relationship in Nigeria" liable for 10 years' imprisonment.

STATE DEPARTMENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT AND OUTREACH

According to the U.S. Department of State's Human Rights Report, because of widespread societal taboos against homosexuality, very few persons lived openly as LGBT. There are reports of communities rounding up suspected homosexuals, stripping them naked, and parading them through villages. A small number of NGOs do provide LGBT groups with legal advice and training in advocacy, media responsibility, and HIV/AIDS awareness and, at least in the past, the government and its agents did not impede the work of these groups. The U.S. Embassy and Consulate actively engage with LGBT NGOs and work to provide quiet support and assistance.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH HIV/AIDS

There are also widespread reports of societal discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS. The public considered the disease a result of immoral behavior and a punishment for homosexual activity. Persons with HIV/AIDS often lost their jobs or were denied basic health-care services. Authorities and NGOs sought to reduce the stigma and change perceptions through public education campaigns. During fiscal year 2012 alone, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) invested \$478.6 million in Nigeria's HIV/AIDS relief efforts, representing an important financial commitment. Activists are concerned that the passage of the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act may seriously damage efforts to reverse the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Nigeria by driving key at-risk populations farther underground.