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Trinidad and Tobago: Amnesty International welcomes Prime Minister's position against discrimination based on sexual orientation

Amnesty International welcomes the statement of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago from 14 August 2012, recently made public in the national media, in which she takes a clear stance "to put an end to all discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation".

The Trinidadian Sexual Offences Act criminalises consenting same-sex relationship and makes it punishable with up to 25 years' imprisonment, depending of the age of those found guilty, and the Immigration Act also prohibits entry of "homosexuals" into the country. Although these provisions are not enforced, they contribute to creating a discriminatory environment against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. In addition the Equal Opportunity Act (2000) explicitly excludes discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The Prime Minister has stated that "the stigmatisation of homosexuality in Trinidad and Tobago is a matter which must be addressed on the grounds of the human rights and dignity to which every individual is entitled under international law". She and her Cabinet have now an historic opportunity to ensure that the Prime Minister's words become a reality, and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is prohibited once and for all in Trinidad and Tobago.

Amnesty International urges the rest of the English-speaking Caribbean countries, where same-sex relationships continue to be criminalized, except the Bahamas, to follow the positive step taken by the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and her Cabinet.