

URGENT ACTION

ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL MAY BE PASSED

The Ugandan Parliament are preparing to debate a bill which entrenches discrimination and hatred against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people on 11 May. The bill, known as the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, has been pending since 2009. There are fears that the bill might be passed on 11 May or before 18 May, as Parliament have to complete their parliamentary business by this date.

On 6 and 9 May 2011, the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee of the Ugandan Parliament held public hearings on the bill, before retiring to finalize their report on its contents. Once this is complete, the usual process is for the bill and report to be tabled before Parliament for debate. The bill is due for the second reading on 11 May 2011 – a process which sets the stage for legislative debate and possible passage into law within a day or days. After a bill is passed by the Ugandan Parliament, it must still be signed by the President in order to become law. The Ugandan Parliament have until 18 May to complete all parliamentary business before a new parliament is sworn in, following general elections in February 2011. Amnesty International is very concerned that the bill may be passed into law on 11 May or before 18 May.

The bill would further authorize discrimination against those who are, or who are believed to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. The Ugandan Penal Code already prohibits consensual sex between individuals of the same sex; this bill goes much further. It introduces the death penalty for the offence of “aggravated homosexuality”, punishes those who do not report violations of the bill’s provisions within 24 hours, and criminalizes the “promotion” of homosexuality. The bill would have lasting, harmful defects on the lives of Ugandans who are thought to breach its far-reaching provisions. It would significantly hamper the work of human rights defenders and public health professionals. Although Amnesty International’s information is that some provisions of the bill may be amended, the content of these amendments remains unclear.

The bill has been revived at a time of diminishing space for the enjoyment of human rights in Uganda. Since the conclusion of the February 2011 general elections, there has been a ban against all forms of public assembly and peaceful demonstration on the grounds of ensuring public security. Protests against rising cost of living increases, the Walk to Work protests, which began on 11 April, have been marred by the excessive use of force by security forces, including the use of firearms against crowds not posing an imminent threat of death or serious injury. At least ten people have been killed and dozens more injured.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:

■ Urging Parliament not to pass the bill in its current or amended form

PLEASE SEND APPEALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND BEFORE 18 MAY 2011 TO:

Prime Minister and Leader of
Government Business in the Parliament
of Uganda

Rt. Hon. Prof. Apolo Nsibambi
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 341, Kampala, Uganda
E-mail: ps@opm.go.ug
Fax: +256 414 341 139

**Salutation: Honourable Prime
Minister**

Leader of the Opposition in the
Parliament of Uganda

Hon. Prof. Morris Ogenga Latigo
Parliament of Uganda
P.O BOX 7178
Kampala, Uganda
Email: latigo@parliament.go.ug

Salutation: Honourable Minister

And copies to:

President of the Republic of Uganda
H.E. Kaguta Yoweri Museveni
Office of the President
PO Box 7168, Kampala, Uganda
E-mail: aak@statehouse.go.ug
Fax: +256 414 346102

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International and other human rights organizations have documented instances of discrimination, arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and other ill-treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Uganda. These human rights violations have been committed in the pretext of enforcing existing provisions of the Ugandan penal code. LGBT people have also been excluded from government HIV/AIDS prevention programmes and the provision of other health services. This bill has the potential to further perpetuate and institutionalize such discrimination. In addition, if enacted into law, this bill would send a clear message that people who violently attack LGBT people solely on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity will not be held accountable for such attacks.

The bill would violate the principle of non-discrimination and would lead to violations of the human rights to freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, liberty and security of the person, privacy, the highest attainable standard of health, and life. These rights are guaranteed under Uganda's Constitution and in international and regional treaties to which Uganda is a party, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

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