

URGENT ACTION

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08 September 2006

UA 243/06 Fear for Safety/ Harassment

UGANDA 13 women (names known to Amnesty International)

On 8 September, the Ugandan newspaper Red Pepper published a list of 13 women they claim are lesbians. Homosexuality is a criminal offence in Uganda, and Amnesty International believes that making such allegations against these women may put them in danger. The article called for people to name other women suspected of being lesbians in order to "rid our motherland of the deadly vice".

This is the third instance in recent weeks of Red Pepper openly and specifically harassing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. On 8 August, the newspaper published a similar list of name of men it claimed were gay. On 7 September, Red Pepper ran an article naming and picturing another man, supposedly wanted by police for engaging in "homosexuality activities [sic]". Following the publication of the list of men on 8 August, Amnesty International received several reports of harassment of LGBT people who had been named. Some reported being harassed by colleagues, while others were ostracized by relatives.

Amnesty International strongly condemned the publication of the article through a public statement issued on 29 August (see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAFR590062006?open&of=ENG-UGA>) and remains concerned that the continued targeting of LGBT people by the Red Pepper newspaper puts those named at high risk of discrimination and violence by individuals or by the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The naming of those accused of being lesbian or gay adds to a pattern of abuse against the rights of LGBT people in Uganda. Amnesty International is concerned that the criminalization of homosexuality, as provided for in the Ugandan the Penal Code, is providing the legal grounds on which these abuses are allowed to happen. Amnesty International has documented some of these instances.

In early June 2006, the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), a coalition of Christian organizations, stated publicly that it "strongly and unequivocally deplores all activities linked to the encouragement or promotion of the practice of homosexuality and lesbianism condemned in the Bible," claiming that homosexuality constitutes "a perversion of human sexuality". The UJCC urged "clergy, parents, and people of good will to design programs aimed at teaching people the dangers associated with homosexuality and Lesbianism [sic]."

On 20 July 2005, LGBT activist Victor Juliet Mukasa's house was raided in her absence. A friend who was staying at her house was arrested and subjected to humiliating and degrading treatment while in police custody. No warrants were produced prior to the search and her friend was released without being charged the next morning.

On 5 July 2005, the Ugandan parliament voted for a constitutional amendment stating that "marriage is lawful only if entered into between a man and a woman". The amendment further declared that it was "unlawful for same-sex couples to marry".

In October 2004, a radio station was compelled to pay a fine for hosting a live talk show with sexual rights activists

Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.

discussing discrimination against LGBT people in Uganda and their need for HIV/AIDS services. The Broadcasting Council imposed a fine of approximately US\$1,000, claiming that the program was "contrary to public morality" and breached existing laws.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern at the publication on 8 September by the Red Pepper newspaper of a list of women accused of being lesbians;
- expressing concern that the ongoing targeting of LGBT people by Red Pepper has put them in danger;
- urging the authorities to investigate fully all reports of attacks on lesbians or gay men, or people alleged to be lesbian or gay;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence against lesbians and gay men is forbidden in accordance with the international standards, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Uganda is a state party.

APPEALS TO:

President:

Pdt. Yoweri Museveni
Parliament Building
PO Box 7168
Kampala
Uganda

Fax: 011 256 41 346 102

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice:

Makubuya Kiddu
Parliament Building
PO Box 7183
Kampala
Uganda

Fax: 011 256 41 2254 828

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs:

Ruhakana Rugunda
Crested Towers
PO Box 7084
Kampala, Uganda

Fax: 011 256 41 2231 188

Ambassador Perezi Kamunanwire
Embassy of the Republic of Uganda
5911 - 16th St. NW
Washington DC 20011

Fax: 1 202 726 1727

Email: ambuganda@aol.com

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 20 October 2006.

Tip of the Month 

-- How to Make Your Urgent Action Letter Writing More Effective --

Be factual in your appeal. Relay the details of the case as you know them. Do not discuss ideology or politics. Your message must be for the benefit of the individual(s) at risk and not a vehicle for political opinions.

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