

- Commonwealth LGBTI Association -

Calling for the protection of LGBTI people in Uganda

10th March 2014

The Commonwealth LGBTI Association welcomes the recent statement by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Kamalesh Sharma, calling for respect for the rights of all human beings “irrespective of their sexual orientation”. Despite this, homosexuality remains illegal in 80 per cent of Commonwealth member states.

As a coalition of LGBTI organisations from around the Commonwealth, we specifically condemn the new Anti-Homosexuality laws in Uganda and Nigeria. Both countries already criminalise private consensual acts between two people of the same gender. These new laws are therefore intended simply to persecute an already vulnerable minority. We condemn the laws on the grounds that:

- They violate the Commonwealth Charter –
 - Part 2 - "opposition to all forms of discrimination",
 - Part 4 “Tolerance, respect and Understanding”,
 - Part 5 “Freedom of Expression”,
 - Part 16 “The Role of Civil Society”;
- They contravene the Constitutions of their respective countries;
- They imperil the ability of NGOs and CSO that work with and for LGBTI communities in the realms of human rights and health;
- and they form part of trend toward limiting human rights and the public sphere

Human rights activist, Frank Mugisha, has noted that his organisation, Sexual Minorities Uganda, has registered an increased number of complaints of verbal and physical attacks and arrests against LGBT Ugandans, since the passage of the Act. Nigerian members of the association are also reporting sustained attacks with impunity on suspected LGBTI individuals. There have also already been 38 arrests made since the end of December with four men being whipped for ‘homosexual conduct’. As LGBTI organisations drawn from across the Commonwealth we seek to draw the Commonwealth Secretariat’s attention to the need expressed by both Ugandan and Nigerian activists for strong statements condemning these new laws.

These new laws are a contradiction of the recently reaffirmed Commonwealth Charter. There is no place for discriminatory and prejudicial laws in a modern Commonwealth based on equality and equity. We therefore call for concrete action from the Secretary-General and Commonwealth Secretariat to support LGBTI individuals living in Uganda and Nigeria.

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