



South African Human Rights Commission

Media Statement: SA must condemn Uganda's anti-gay law

27th February 2014

ATTENTION: Editors and Reporters

The South African Human Rights Commission (the Commission) welcomes the announcement by the South African government that it will seek information from capitals around the world on the protection of lesbians, gays, bisexual, and transsexual and intersex persons.

This follows concerns raised around the decision by Uganda to pass Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2014, which was signed into law by President Yoweri Museveni early this week. The promulgation made Uganda the 38th country in Africa to outlaw gay rights.

The Ugandan law allows for repeat homosexuality offenders to be jailed for life. The legislation also outlaws the promotion of homosexuality and requires people to denounce gays and lesbians.

The Commission fears that the law could potentially put the safety of citizens, not only Ugandans, but even South Africans who work or travel to Uganda, at risk.

The Commission believes that our government should make its rejection of Uganda's draconian law clear and visible, and join those who respect the rights and freedoms of every person to call for the repeal of this and all similar legislation and to follow good human rights practices in line with its commitments under international and regional laws.

In 2011 South Africa initiated a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council in support of gay rights. South Africa is a member of the Human Rights Council and is considered a leader in the area of human rights. Our government therefore is rightfully expected and needs to speak out against all laws that seek to discriminate against and violate the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The Commission also strongly rejects the notion that the freedom to live and love without fear of violence and regardless of one's sexual orientation is part of a rights framework from Western countries. The struggle for these and other freedoms has been at the heart of liberation struggles throughout the African continent. The Commission remains deeply

concerned about the alarming growth of state-sanctioned homophobia taking place on the African continent and even across the globe.

The South African government should actively engage with African countries that seek to outlaw fundamental freedoms and human rights, including gay rights, to desist from such intended practices.

The Commission lends its support to government and civil society in efforts to address the challenges of violence against sexual minorities, and attempts to improve the responsiveness of our criminal justice system.

ENDS

Issued by the SA Human Rights Commission

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