



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Members of the European Parliament

URGENT OPEN LETTER

Rt. Hon. Edward Ssekandi Kiwanuka
Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament

326 Members of the Ugandan Parliament

Concerns: Do not adopt the Anti-Homosexuality Bill

Reference: 20110511/BS

Strasbourg, 11th May 2011

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members of the Parliament of Uganda,

The world has started reacting to the imminent examination of Mr Bahati's Anti-Homosexuality Bill, and possibly its adoption before the end of this legislature. If the Bill is not voted upon this week, we understand it may be adopted during Parliament's next session.

We call on you not to adopt this inhumane Bill not as Europeans, not as aid donors, not as a 'global moral police', but as fellow law-makers and fellow human beings. We share your values of human dignity, liberty, peace, and freedom from oppression; and the Anti-Homosexuality Bill goes fully against these values.

Concerns were raised that homosexuality is un-African; yet Africa is not united against homosexuality. While revising its Penal Code a year ago, Rwanda refused to criminalise homosexuality, and made a powerful statement at the United Nations in December 2010 against the persecution of all minorities, including lesbians and gays. Is Rwanda un-African? South Africa enshrined non-discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in its constitution, and allows same-sex couples to marry. Is South Africa un-African? Gabon, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Seychelles, São Tomé e Príncipe, Mauritius and South Africa recently UN made statements against the criminalisation of homosexuality. Are these countries un-African?

We are acutely aware of other, none the less grave, ongoing human rights violations in Uganda. We have learnt of authorities tear-gassing marchers *en masse* during the 29 April demonstrations; opposition figures being intimidated, imprisoned, or intentionally blinded in a shocking display of inhumanity by national authorities; and national authorities increasingly oppressing the people of Uganda through physical repression, intimidation, or imprisonment.

We are fully aware that the last-minute examination of this Bill is an excellent way of diverting your attention, and with it the attention of the Ugandan people, from these serious concerns.

Our House, elected by 500 million citizens, has formally called on Uganda not to adopt the Anti-Homosexuality Bill on two occasions¹. We are determined that the adoption of any legislation further criminalising consensual sex between adults (including the adoption of this Bill, whether in its current or in any modified form) will have a severe negative impact on our bilateral relations, in both its aid and its diplomatic dimensions.

We call on you to refrain from further criminalising homosexuality. The people of Uganda deserve that your attention be fully devoted to more pressing concerns, including corruption-free governance, basic commodity prices brought under control, freedom of speech and assembly, and decent living conditions.

Do not adopt this Bill.

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¹ Uganda: anti-homosexual draft legislation, 17 December 2009 (P7_TA(2009)0019);

Uganda: the Bahati Bill and discrimination against the LGBT population, 17 December 2010 (P7_TA(2010)0495)

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