

PUBLIC

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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 names 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 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 programmes 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 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 programme was "contrary to public morality" and breached existing laws.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- 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: + 256 41 346 102

Email: info@gouexecutive.net

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Makubuya Kiddu

Parliament Building

PO Box 7183

Kampala

Uganda

Fax: + 256 41 2254 828

Email: info@justice.go.ug

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs

Ruhakana Rugunda

Crested Towers

PO Box 7084

Kampala, Uganda

Fax: + 256 41 2231 188

and to diplomatic representatives of Uganda accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 October 2006.