

Uganda's Anti-Gay Legislation. Jail Sentence of 18 Years for "Promoting Homosexuality"

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Global Research, December 21, 2013

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Friday 19th of December felt more like a 13th for many Ugandans. The country has finally passed its notorious anti-gay bill. The bill makes it a crime to be gay, to 'promote homosexuality' and not to report someone who is gay to the authorities. So far so very 1930s Germany . After years of fear instilling promises to codify the death penalty for being gay, the proposed state sponsored holocaust has been somewhat tempered down to a severe jail sentence of up to 18 years. This giant step backwards for Uganda is a giant step backwards for all of humankind.

David Behati, the Member of Parliament who first proposed the private members' bill, may not have had his blood lust satiated but the passed bill is still one of the most anti-human laws in the world. Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi opposed the bill and as yet President Museveni has not yet ratified it. The death knell is yet to toll. The only hope for Uganda's LGBTQ communities, as well as their families and friends, is a massive outcry from the rest of the world.

What can we do? The threat of withholding development aid is one of the most powerful tools that we have at our disposals. For all the problems, corruption and mis-management that are our international development agencies are plagued with they sometimes get it right. Sometimes they even do what's right. I urge everyone to write to their governments and demand that all aid to Uganda is suspended if President Museveni signs this bill into place. It is the last and only hope for Uganda's LGBTQ communities and the least we owe our fellow men and women.

It is unconscionable that such an abhorrent sentence be imposed on anyone who dares to be themselves and dares to love who they want to love. Ethnocentric worries about imposing Western moral belief systems fall out the window when human rights come into play. Respect for humanity is not the sole preserve of Western minds. Gay rights are human rights. Human rights are universal. They may not be afforded universally but human rights are most definitely universal.

To those who say that withholding aid from Uganda will only punish those who need it most I do see your reasoning but I believe it is flawed. It is true that those who need aid most in Uganda are not served sufficiently by their government. There are millions of people in Uganda dependent on international development through no fault of their own. The West owes a huge debt to the Ugandan people for years of colonial and post-colonial exploitation. Their extreme poverty has its roots in our historical and present day lust for Africa's wealth. This needs to be addressed, acknowledged and rectified. But sacrificing and ignoring the

rights of LGBTQ Ugandans, their families and friends is not the way to go about it.

The bloated Ugandan political class and their evangelical puppet masters respond to one thing and one thing only. Money. If they see aid being withdrawn from their country they just might decide that the divide and conquer strategy is not the best way to line their bank accounts. The threat of ceasing aid from the United States and the United Kingdom has worked in the past to delay the bill until now. A more concerted effort is what is needed right now.

It won't be long before petitions start appearing on your facebook newsfeed so until then please take a moment to stand up for the rights of the millions of people whose lives will be destroyed if President Museveni does finally toll the death knell. Write to your member of parliament, your senator, your development minister, your president, your prime minister. Write to whomever you think might have a little influence. Just maybe they will do what's right if enough of us implore them to.

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