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Ghana turns down homosexuals' bid for recognition

[afrol News / PlusNews, 5 September](#) - A request formulated by a homosexual rights association in Ghana to recognise their existence to guarantee a better access to HIV/AIDS services has started an avalanche of hostile reactions in the country. But the Ghanaian press has also discovered that "homosexuality is real in Ghana," not just a Western phenomenon.

The strong reactions followed a statement made in August by Prince MacDonald, presented as "the president of Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana", during a broadcast by 'Joy FM', a private radio station based in the capital, Accra, during which Mr MacDonald pled for a public recognition of the existence of homosexuality. The gay leader further announced that Ghana would soon host an international conference organised by his group on this topic.

Only a few listeners and organisations defending human rights and fighting against the AIDS reacted positively and stressed that a public recognition of homosexuality would help to limit the spread of HIV within this sexual minority, known to be vulnerable to the disease.

Otherwise, the request by Mr MacDonald was largely condemned, in particular by authorities. A government spokesman further said that the conference planned by the gay organisation would not be allowed to take place in Ghana, alleging that homosexuality was an offence according to the Ghanaian legislation.

"The [Ghanaian] government would like that that is very clear: it shall not permit the proposed conference of international gays and lesbians to take place anywhere in Ghana," said Kwamena Bartels, Ghana's Minister of Information and National Orientation, in an official statement quoted by the British daily newspaper 'Times'.

According to Minister Bartels, this refusal was based on the fact that the government could not "excuse activities which actively offend the culture, the morality and the heritage of the whole of the Ghanaian people."

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The public debate following Mr MacDonald's statements has also awoken the conservative church community in Ghana. The Church of Pentecost in Ghana has released a statement, saying it was "disturbed" by evidence that homosexuality was gaining roots in the country. "For a nation whose social norms frown on adultery and fornication, the open espousal and justification of lesbianism and homosexuality must be considered horrifying," said the statement.

"Lesbianism and homosexuality are completely alien to Ghanaian culture," the statement added. The Christian Council of Ghana made similar statements this week. Also Muslims, through the Ghana Office of the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, this week hailed the government's decision to ban the planned gay and lesbian conference.

While most reactions have been hostile, the gay activist at least has managed to spur a debate over the existence of homosexuality in Ghana. The 'Ghanaian Times' on Saturday published an article titled "Research showed homosexuality is real in Ghana," objectively referring to scientific research. Homosexuality "is not a recent phenomenon being visited on Ghana and Ghanaians by 'whites' or foreigners," the research had demonstrated.

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