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HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

“No One Should Have to Live in Fear Simply because of Who They Are”

Letter from Religious Leaders to the Ugandan Government

President Yoweri Museveni
President of the Republic of Uganda
State House Nakasero
P.O. Box 24594
Kampala, Uganda

Dear President Museveni,

As leaders of diverse religious communities, we call on you to stop the verbal assaults and legal attacks of your government on the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. All religious traditions demand that we care for the neighbor and the oppressed among us and that we uphold the dignity of every person. No one should have to live in fear simply because of who they are. As a moral leader we know that you do not wish to see Uganda citizens suffer unnecessarily, and we are therefore asking you to call an end to the witch hunt against the most vulnerable in your community.

We are particularly concerned that members of your government have called for criminal action against people solely because of whom they love and have censored and silenced attempts by LGBT people to speak on their own behalf. These actions only promote fear, profound isolation and invisibility.

Like you, we are committed to building bridges of understanding across divides of difference in which the values of justice, solidarity, compassion, equality and human dignity are values we are called on not only to preach but to live. These are not just our principles but are consistent with Uganda's commitments to human rights. As you know, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights affirms the equality of all people and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protects the right to equality, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association. We are only asking that you hold up the solid principles your government espouses.

Open aggression against LGBT people is especially devastating in the context of the HIV pandemic. Discrimination and stigma contribute to misinformation and fear. The

pandemic can only be stopped with prevention, treatment, care and support in enabling environments that protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the process.

We reach out to you in fellowship and ask that you publicly condemn all harassment against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Uganda. Uganda is a rich and diverse country that has the potential to be a model for the rest of the world of compassion and justice.

Sincerely,

Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Archbishop
Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Chair
Moderator's Global Justice Team
Metropolitan Community Churches

Rev. Nancy L. Wilson, Moderator
Metropolitan Community Churches

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