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HEALTH NEWS

Ugandan police arrest gay protestors at AIDS conference

By DPA

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Kampala - Ugandan Police arrested a group of gay activists demanding the right to HIV/AIDS treatment at an international AIDS conference in Kampala on Wednesday.

Hundreds of activists disrupted the morning plenary session of the conference, calling for rights, recognition and access to services and funds extended to groups involved in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

'We came to demonstrate because there is a need to include gay Ugandans in HIV programmes,' the group's leader, Julian Onziema, 28, told Deutsche Presse-Agentur dpa shortly before he was arrested.

The number of Ugandan homosexuals is not known, but membership of gay groups is believed to be increasing as activists step up their attempts to secure gay rights.

Uganda does not recognize gay rights and people found guilty of homosexual acts can be sentenced to life imprisonment. However, nobody has ever been convicted of the crime.

Homosexuality is frowned upon in many African nations.

Gambian President Yahya Gammeh recently threatened to 'cut off the head' of any homosexual caught in the West African nation.

Two Spanish tourists were arrested on Tuesday for making homosexual advances to Gambian taxi drivers, but are now believed to have been released.

Homosexuality carries a sentence of up to 14 years in Gambia.

More than 1,700 delegates are attending the five-day conference that began in Kampala Tuesday.

They are examining the challenges faced by governments, non- governmental organizations and United Nations agencies in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

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