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[Ugandan activists detained in "pattern of police harassment"](#)

By [Staff Writer, PinkNews.co.uk](#) • September 26, 2008 - 17:34



President of Uganda Kaguta Yoweri Museveni spoke out against homosexuals

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Two human rights advocates in Uganda were held for a week without charges after police accused them of "recruiting homosexuals."

New York-based Human Rights Watch said the illegal detention of George "Georgina" Oundo and "Brenda" Kiiza was part of "a pattern of police harassment of LGBT people in Uganda."

They were held seven days without being brought before a judge or having charges laid against them.

"According to their lawyer, the police accused the two defenders of "recruiting homosexuals" – not a crime defined in the Ugandan Penal Code – and took them into custody," HRW reports.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) has backed calls for the police to end their investigations into the activists and "respect the basic freedoms of all Ugandans regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity."

Oundo and Kiiza said the police entered their home on September 10th and confiscated magazines and books on sexual orientation and gender identity.

At the Nabweru station, officers took their cell phones and copied down the names found in them and questioned Oundo and Kiiza about other people the police accused of being homosexuals.

The two said that the police repeatedly beat them with a baton during interrogation and denied them food.

"Oundo and Kiiza are entitled to the same constitutional protections as all Ugandans, regardless of their sexual orientation," said Juliana Cano Nieto, researcher for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Programme at Human Rights Watch.

"The Uganda police must stop trampling on the rights of the Ugandan LGBT community."

Oundo and Kiiza were released on September 18th after their lawyer threatened to take the matter to court.

The investigation remains open.

HRW previously reported that on May 20th, "club bouncers in a Kampala bar beat Georgina and another transgender friend and took them to the Kabalagala police station. There, police detained them for four days without charge."

HRW and IGLHRC said they are "deeply concerned that this mounting pattern of abuse – arrest, ill-treatment in detention, and then release – silences Ugandan human rights activists, including LGBT rights activists, through constant harassment."

President of Uganda Kaguta Yoweri Museveni and other officials have spoken out against homosexuals on numerous occasions.

In June this year, Ugandan Bishop Luzinda said:

"I have been hearing that gays are demanding that the government should legalise their activities.

"This is absurd because God created a man and woman so that they can produce and fill this world.

"The government should not be tempted to legalise this backward culture which is bound to destroy this

country.

"Not all that comes from Europe is superior and must be taken up by us," Bishop Luzinda said.

Mr Museveni spoke of his country's "rejection" of homosexuality during a speech he gave at the wedding of a former MP's daughter earlier this year.

He said the purpose of life was to create children and that homosexuality was a "negative foreign culture."

During his time in office LGBT Ugandans have been repeatedly threatened, harassed or attacked. Many have fled the country.

The plight of Uganda's gay men and lesbians has been highlighted recently, with high profile asylum cases such as Prossy Kakooza championed by Peter Tatchell and LGBT equality groups.

Gay asylum seekers are being deported from the UK on the premise that they can continue to pursue their sexuality in the native land if they act "discreetly."

In 2005 Uganda became the first country in the world to introduce laws banning same-sex marriage.

Section 140 of Uganda's penal code carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment for homosexual conduct, while Section 141 punishes 'attempts' at carnal knowledge with a maximum of seven years of imprisonment.

Section 143 punishes acts of "gross indecency" with up to five years in prison, while a sodomy conviction carries a penalty of 14 years to life imprisonment.

Last year James Nsaba Buturo, the country's Minister for Ethics and Integrity, said the government is committed to stopping LGBT people "trying to impose a strange, ungodly, unhealthy, unnatural, and immoral way of life on the rest of our society."

The leading Muslim cleric in Uganda, Sheikh Ramathan Shaban Mubajje, has come up with a novel solution to deal with gay and lesbians speaking up in the country.

He told journalists he had recommended to the country's President at a meeting that all gay people should be sent into exile on an island in Lake Victoria.

"If they die there then we shall have no more homosexuals in the country," he added.

There has been rising tension in the country over gay and lesbian rights. Trans people are also targeted by police and regularly subject to abuse and harassment.

The IGLHRC said:

"In the past five years, the government has arrested LGBT people on sodomy charges, harassed LGBT human rights defenders, and fined a private radio station that broadcast programming on HIV prevention and men who have sex with men," the group said.

"A coalition of religious leaders has marched through the streets of Kampala demanding the arrests of LGBT people with one cleric even calling for the "starving to death" of homosexuals.

"Inspired by the official homophobia of the state, the Ugandan media has published lists of gay men and lesbians, leading to physical violence, loss of employment and educational opportunities by LGBT people."

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