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Uganda vows crackdown on gays

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Kampala - The Ugandan government said on Saturday it would strengthen anti-gay laws and step up police operations against homosexuals amid concern over the "mushrooming" number of gays and lesbians in the East African nation.

"The state of moral health in our nation is challenging and we are concerned about the mushrooming of lesbianism and homosexuality," Ethics and Integrity Minister James Nsaba Buturo told a news conference.

"Ten years ago, this phenomena was not there, but the disease has penetrated everywhere," he added.

Same sex intercourse and marriage is illegal in Uganda. The official sentence is life imprisonment, but there is no record of anyone being convicted in Ugandan courts.

Buturo said that the law would be changed to increase the number of prosecutions.

"It is true that the law on homosexuality is not comprehensive and that the criminals just walk away and police find it difficult to prosecute," he said. "We need to address this gap."

"We want it to become law in that if someone is a homosexual or confesses to being a gay or lesbian, then he is a criminal," he added.

Gays, who are believed to number in the tens of thousands, remain underground in Uganda as a result of the stringent laws.

