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## **Uganda fights to keep straight, but money stands in the way**

Excerpt;

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Homosexuality is keeping Uganda in the news. Human Rights Watch, the International Aids Society and other gay rights organisations have blacklisted Uganda as insensitive to homosexuals and are making a lot of noise about it. Clearly, they have made some progress. The word that was taboo is now an openly talked about subject in some places. Ironically, the church, the very institution that is fiercely against homosexuality, is the very one bringing it into the limelight.

Renowned Kansanga Miracle Centre church pastor Isaac Kiwewesi was recently accused of sodomising five members of his congregation. As if that was not bad enough, another pastor, Solomon Male brought up similar charges against Kiwewesi, this time claiming that his own son had been sodomised by Kiwewesi. The police later acquitted Pastor Kiwewesi of these allegations and in a strange twist of justice, arrested one of the complainants David Arinatwe in connection with theft.

These events may not seem alarming to the ordinary Ugandan but to Hon. Nsaba Buturo, minister of state for ethics and integrity, religious leaders like Pastor Martin Sempa, Pastor Solomon Male and Sheikh Shaban Mubajje, homosexuality is threatening to erode the moral fiber of Uganda.

Many Ugandans abhor the idea of homosexuality, but for some it's a means of survival, a guarantee to get a visa or refugee status in a Western country or just simply a sexual orientation.

Aloysius Mukisa is a former homosexual. He runs an electrical appliance shop on Sunset Arcade in Kampala. He says he got into homosexuality to escape poverty.

“I worked as a mechanic in Naalya (a Kampala suburb) for two years after my ‘A’ levels. I couldn’t proceed to university due to lack of money,” he said. “My girlfriend at the time brought the idea of going to the UK for odd jobs. I tried but didn’t succeed.” He managed to go to South Africa where he became a fake traditional healer. “We were many Ugandans and competition was stiff. We turned to drugs to forget our problems and soon I got into homosexuality to get money,” said Mukisa. He goes on: “Sometime in 2007, I was involved in a car accident in Pretoria. The authorities discovered I was illegally living in South Africa and when I got better I was deported. While in hospital, I discovered I was HIV positive.”

At 32, James Mwini (not real name) is very successful. A graduate of law from Makerere University, Mwini is also studying accounting and works for a prestigious international bank in Kampala.

He leaves in Bugolobi, drives a good car and dresses tastefully. He is friendly, generous and most evenings he entertains his close friends at the city’s best bars. Mwini is a bisexual and in an interview with The Independent he said he feels trapped.

“I wish I was like any other man. I wish I could get a girlfriend, marry and have children,” said Mwini. His parents are now asking him to settle down and give them grandchildren. His elder brother is a father of three already.

This is how he got trapped. In 2000 while at Makerere University, Mwini was in a relationship with an American woman who was working with a children’s NGO in Kampala. Mwini narrates: “My girlfriend had a house in Kansanga. I was very much in love with her. We would host wild parties at her home very often. On one such night, we became drunk and got carried away. We invited a man to our bed and had sex with him. The man asked me for anal sex, my girlfriend got excited and said she wanted to watch. I wanted to please her so I accepted. It became a habit and she would always be there watching us. By the time she left Uganda, I couldn’t turn back.”

Its eight years since that wild time but Mwini is still a homosexual, so entrenched that he can no longer hold his stool. He depends on sanitary towels to avoid soiling himself. He does not have sexual relations with women because he is never attracted to women. He also fears getting intimate with a woman because he cannot hide the physical damage of homosexuality.

The law on homosexuality and lesbianism in Uganda is vague. Constitutionally it is not a crime for anyone to declare that they are homosexual, nor is it a crime to distribute gay literature. However it is a crime to practice acts that suggest gay or lesbian tendencies like same sex marriages, two people of the same sex kissing in public or having sexual relations with an individual or individuals of the same sex.

In the meantime, the signs are there that homosexuality is growing in the Ugandan society. Between September 22 and 27, workshops were held at the Grand Imperial Hotel and at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel. Both workshops were organized by the gay community in Uganda. At least once a month, a workshop of this nature is held in a different town somewhere in the country. These workshops are well attended and well funded from within and internationally. Local funding comes from the homosexuals who, according to some reports, include rich businessmen and politicians.

Normally, the agenda of these conferences is to encourage the gay community not to feel alone, to network, introduce new members, offer sex education and to raise money to support gays who are being persecuted because of their openness about their sexual orientation and also to recruit new members. Recruitment is reportedly highest in secondary schools and in prisons.

According to Buturo, gay tendencies in the west were as a result of ideology sown earlier in their civilization. "To say that it is ok for two men or two women to have sexual relationship with each other is not civilization but savagery," he said. "To also imply that Uganda must embrace ideologies of this nature is not only unfair, but insane. This government will not be put at ransom to allow these practices to continue. I have heard that in some countries, some sex organizations are asking their governments not to give aid to Uganda until it allows what they call human rights practices to be restored. We say strongly, we don't need that kind of aid."

Buturo is aware that homosexuality may be a bigger problem since it is a well guarded secret that spreads quietly. There is also a growing number of bisexuals. There are reports of couples who invite others in their beds to "spice" things up. The couples who engage in these acts do not consider themselves homosexuals, rather, they think they are adventurous.

But there may be fewer homosexuals in Uganda. There are reports that there are many people who are claiming to be homosexual to get money. Others do it to secure asylum abroad. Buturo may be glad to know that the fight to keep Uganda straight may not be lost yet but he should not forget that one man's meat is another man's poison.