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[Persecution of gays intensifies in Uganda](#)

afrol News, 1 December - Human rights groups report of a "dramatic escalation of intimidation and persecution" of gay and lesbian activists in Uganda as result of a government campaign. Ugandan authorities are following the Church in demonising homosexuality in the country.

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) this week reported this intensified persecution of homosexuals in Uganda. The increased pressure on pro-gay organisations comes after the Anglican Church of Uganda launched a strong campaign against homosexuality.

- The government action seems to have been touched-off by the broadcasting of a call-in talk show on 'Radio Simba', according to IGLRC. 'Radio Simba' is a popular Ugandan radio station that featured sexual rights activists - a lesbian and two gay men - discussing discrimination against homosexuals in Uganda and the need for HIV/AIDS services for men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women.

As a result of the open discussion, the Broadcasting Council of the government of Uganda imposed a fine of approximately US\$ 1000 on the radio station and ordered the station to apologise for "having offended a wide section of the public."

The chairman of the Broadcasting Council, Godfrey Mutabazi, claimed that the programme violated federal law prohibiting broadcasting that is contrary to "public morality". The council also threatened other broadcasters, advising them to "be more responsible about the content of their programmes."

According to IGLHRC, the Broadcasting Council's threats "seem to have encouraged a flurry of public assaults on the safety of individuals whose actual or perceived sexual

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practices fall outside of social or cultural norms." The Ugandan press soon followed the advice of the Council.

In October, the Ugandan weekly 'The Xtreme', published a list of purportedly gay people. The article further claimed that homosexuals have "invaded" and "infested" Uganda. The publication threatened to release more names over time, the result of which would be to create a climate of fear and threat that violates individuals' rights to privacy and security of person.

When Francesco Mascini, the First Secretary and Legal Advisor at the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Kampala, challenged the Uganda Human Rights Commission to have an open conversation about sexuality and sexual orientation, he was ridiculed by the government, calling his appeal "indecent", and arguing that Ugandans "have more pressing issues to propose debate about."

- Uganda's determination to shut down public discussion of sexual rights issues, and the public threats to anyone who challenges the government's efforts to limit freedom of speech and association violate the very fundamentals of human rights, stated Susana Fried of IGLHRC. "We see, time and again, how claims to protect 'public morality' are used for the distinctly immoral purpose of excusing a pattern of human rights abuses against marginalized communities," Ms Fried added.

In another set of incidents, the government of Uganda is reported to have directed the police to investigate and "take appropriate action" against "homosexual associations" at a major Ugandan university. Activists in Uganda have perceived this as a direct threat to their freedom of expression and association, as well as their ability to receive an education in conditions of safety and security.

According to IGLHRC, President Yoweri Museveni's government has "a documented record of torture and abuse of lesbians and gay men." In 1999 for example, five Ugandan gay and lesbian activists were tortured in secret government detention centres and forced to flee the country after the president called for the arrest of "homosexuals".

- The newly-intensified threats represent a cyclical pattern of abuse under an administration that is known for fostering a climate in which human rights violations against targeted dissidents persist and increase, the pro-gay group said in a statement.

IGLHRC added that it was "deeply concerned about recent violations of the rights to privacy, freedom of association and expression, and the right to education in Uganda." According to IGLHRC, the government of Uganda "is undermining its own commitment to HIV prevention and a progressive human rights record by endangering the safety and security of those willing to speak out for change."

By staff writer

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