



18 September 2007

Mark Dybul
Global AIDS Coordinator
Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator
SA-29, 2nd Floor 2201 C. Street NW
Washington, DC 20522-2920

Dear Ambassador Dybul:

I would like to bring to your attention recent verbal and physical attacks on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Uganda and their inevitable impact on HIV prevention, treatment and care efforts in that country. I am specifically concerned that two of the main architects of what appears to be an orchestrated hate campaign are grantees of U.S. government funds intended to fight HIV.

On August 16, 2007, Sexual Minorities of Uganda (SMUG), a coalition of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights groups, held a press conference at the Speke Hotel in Kampala to launch their campaign, "Let Us Live in Peace," designed to obtain basic rights, respect and dignity for LGBT people. On August 21, Martin Ssempe, pastor of the Makerere University Community Church, held a public rally in Kampala at which he called homosexuality "a criminal act against the laws of nature" and led demonstrators in demanding government action against LGBT people. The Makerere University Community Church (and its Campus Alliance to Wipe Out AIDS/CAWA) is listed on the U.S. Embassy in Uganda's website as being a PEPFAR grantee in 2004 (<http://www.state.gov/s/gac/partners/70331.htm>). Though Mr. Ssempe denies having received PEPFAR funding, IGLHRC has documentation of the grant.

Mr. Ssempe has stated on numerous occasions that homosexuals should have no rights in Uganda and "should absolutely not be included in Uganda's HIV/AIDS framework...." (17 August 2007, <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73931>). In addition to his anti-gay proselytizing, Mr. Ssempe has burned condoms in public, supposedly to expose the technical flaws in a particular batch that had been sent to Uganda. More accurately though his actions seem designed to highlight the supposed ineffectiveness of condoms in HIV prevention. Publicly burning condoms dismisses the role they have played in saving countless lives in Uganda and is an invitation to HIV exposure, and death for anyone who chooses to be sexually active, particularly sex workers and their clients,, and for the many Ugandans who are in committed, monogamous relationships with HIV-positive partners.

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

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The Uganda Muslim Tabligh Community Women's Desk received a PEPFAR grant in 2005 to implement HIV programs in Masaka District (<http://usembassy.state.gov/posts/ug1/Wwwhrecentawards.html>). Recently, Muslim Tabligh youth in Uganda announced a plan to form an 'Anti-Gay Squad' to fight homosexuality. Sheikh Multah Bukenya, a senior cleric in the Tabligh Organization was quoted as saying during prayers 28 August 2007 at Noor Mosque in Kampala that his followers are "ready to act swiftly and form this squad that will wipe out all abnormal practices like homosexuality in our society." (<http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=uganda&id=1678>).

Unfortunately, rather than providing protection for members of the LGBT community, key members of the Ugandan government have contributed to the rising tide of violence. In an interview with the Monitor newspaper, Minister of Ethics and Integrity and Government Spokesperson James Nsaba Buturo said, "...gays have no rights in society. No law in Uganda gives them rights...It's good that they have come out and we are going to deal with them like never before." (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200708281217.html>)

Violence against anyone suspected of being gay or lesbian, or of supporting LGBT rights, has increased since these statements by Mr. Ssempe, Sheikh Bukenya, and Mr. Buturo. The following are a few examples that have been documented by SMUG:

- On August 28, Brian, 25, was attacked by three people unknown to him around 12:00 midnight as he was returning home to Kireka, a suburb of Kampala. The perpetrators reportedly said, "He is the one," before beating him up and fleeing.
- On August 22, at around 7 p.m. Dan K. was verbally and physically abused by parishioners at St. Matia Mulumba Church in Old Kampala, after attending a mass at which the priest openly attacked gays, lesbians and homosexuality in Uganda.
- Paul K., a taxi driver and one of the SMUG members who openly displayed his face at the August 16, 2007 press conference, has been receiving threatening telephone calls. During a call he received on August 28, Paul recognized the voices of other taxi drivers with whom he works telling him that he would be beaten if he came to work at his usual taxi stand. Paul O. has left his home for fear of retribution by neighbors who recognized him from the television and newspaper coverage of the press conference.
- Nickie was accosted by a man at a bar called "Ground Zero" at Wandegeya at around 10 pm on August 31, 2007. The patron shouted, "She is one of them," manhandled her, and physically stopped her from playing a game of pool.

Attempts to address HIV prevention among same-sex practicing men and women in Uganda have been consistently attacked. In October 2004, the Minister of Information James Nsaba Buturo and the Ugandan Broadcasting Council fined Radio Simba more than \$1,000 and ordered it to make a public apology for hosting a show that discussed homosexuality and HIV prevention. In the same month, the UNAIDS country

representative to Uganda was asked to leave the country after he met with gays and lesbians in Kampala to discuss HIV prevention. Less than two weeks ago, on 29 August 2007, Capital One Radio presenter Gaetano Kaggwa was suspended by the Broadcasting Council for broadcasting a show about lesbianism.

Silencing LGBT voices or adopting punitive approaches only serves to drive sexual minorities underground and reduces opportunities for education and dialogue. What gay or bisexual man would seek treatment for an anal STD at a public or religious health clinic in the context of the current homophobic discourse in Uganda? What unmarried woman would attempt to obtain family planning assistance or HIV prevention information? How could LGBT people, sex workers, unmarried sexually active adults, or anyone else expect to receive unbiased, nonjudgmental HIV information or care at the Makerere Community Church or the Tabliq Women's Desk?

In 2007, IGLHRC issued its report on HIV and Same-Sex Practices in Africa, entitled *Off the Map: How HIV/AIDS Programming in Africa is Failing Same-Sex Practicing People*, which I am enclosing for your reference, which clarifies the many ways in which criminalization and discrimination against homosexuals impedes access to HIV services and puts all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, at risk. Abstinence-only until marriage HIV prevention programs in particular exclude lesbians and gay men, by definition, particularly since the passage of the October 2005 constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage in Uganda.

The homophobic campaigns of Mr. Ssempe and Sheikh Bukenya contradict U.S. government HIV policy which includes, as a priority intervention, prevention of HIV infection in the most-at-risk populations, including men who have sex with men. PEPFAR's own documentation confirms that this group has the least access to basic health care. The United States—a country in which the High Court has decriminalized homosexual sex (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003) and condemned the targeting of gay and lesbian people for discrimination and mistreatment (*Romer v. Evans*, 1995)—must not financially support groups whose practices impede program goals or whose leaders use the money to promote stigma. While the Makerere Community Church and the Tabliq Organization have the right to express their opinions, objectionable as they may be, they must not receive U.S. funds intended to fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic with which to do so.

We would very much like to know if Mr. Ssempe continues to receive U.S. government funding, either directly or through any subgranting agreement. If so, we urge you to reconsider such action. We would like confirmation that the Tabliq Women's Desk is not connected in any way to the Tabliq Youth "anti-gay squads" and that lesbian and bisexual women would not be targets for discrimination and persecution when seeking services from this PEPFAR grantee. Furthermore, we would like your assurance that PEPFAR funds are not being used to support organizations anywhere in the world that espouse discrimination and violence against minority groups.

To quote the message of Sexual Minorities of Uganda offered at their press conference, "to successfully stop HIV/AIDS, we must treat every person with the dignity and attention they deserve. No one can justify taking away a person's right to live, when protection and treatment should be readily available to all."

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



Paula Ettelbrick
Executive Director

Cc: Rep. Nita Lowey, Chair, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and
Related Programs
Rep. Frank R. Wolf, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Rep. Tom Lantos, Committee on Foreign Affairs
Rep. Donald Payne, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health
Ambassador Jimmy Kolker, Deputy U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
and Director of Multilateral Diplomacy
Dr. Thomas A. Kenyon, Principal Deputy Coordinator and Chief Medical
Officer, Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator
Ambassador Steven A. Browning, U.S. Ambassador to Uganda
Margot Ellis, Mission Director, USAID Uganda