



REFUGEE LAW PROJECT



AWDF



FIDA UGANDA



Center for Domestic Violence Prevention



Centre for Women in Governance (CEWIGO)

THE CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

The murder of David Kato: One Week Later

The brutal murder of our colleague, friend and committed activist, David Kato, just one week ago, has shocked and saddened us beyond measure; we mourn his untimely passing both for the person he was, and for the contribution he made to the struggle for human rights, equality, constitutionalism and social justice in Uganda. We grieve with family and friends for this loss to us all, and we weep for a Uganda in which such an act can come to pass. We condemn in the strongest terms the perpetrator(s) of this act; we join our voice to the many who are calling for a full and fair investigation into David's murder, and, once the facts of the matter are fully established, we demand the prosecution of the perpetrator/s to the fullest extent of the law.

To those who, before the facts of the matter have even been fully established, seek to trivialize the significance of this murder by portraying it as a robbery gone bad, and to those who gratuitously speculate that it was gay-on-gay violence, we say as follows:

In the climate of fear and homophobic hatred stirred up in Uganda by political and religious leaders, as well as some sections of the public media, a murder of this kind was increasingly possible; the question was not whether it would

happen, but when. David, along with fellow activists, had been facing direct intimidation, including receiving threats, for many months before he was killed. The matter now, therefore, is to ensure that those who survive can be better protected from violence.

We salute the Government of Uganda through the Media Center for coming out and expressing their commitment to the thorough investigation of this case and to assuring the safety of all Ugandans. We hope that the Government will be able to follow up on this promise.

In the same vein, we call on political leaders to abandon hate speech and to adhere to the principles of democratic constitutionalism; to those who seek political popularity through inciting hatred we point to the example of President Obama whose democratic power resides in a message of mutual respect and tolerance.

We also call all on religious leaders, whatever their denomination, and whether they are located in America or Uganda, to promote love of one's neighbour rather than narrow-minded bigotry. Religious fundamentalism has done much to make such a murder possible in Uganda. The relentless references to Sodom and Gomorrah and what

befell the citizenry there being one example of how such speech fuels violence and murder.

We also call on the media to be more responsible in their reporting as sometimes their stories may incite violence and thus fuel murders such as that of David. The fact that David was one of the persons named in the Rolling Stone tabloid as one of Uganda's top 100 homosexuals, and the call therein to 'Hang them' cannot and should not easily be dismissed as having made no contribution to his subsequent murder.

As we move towards national elections, we call on the Ugandan Government to dismiss the Anti-Homosexuality Bill once and for all on the grounds that, if passed into law, it would not only be both unconstitutional and an assault on the rights of all Ugandans, but also a catalyst to homophobia and its dangerous consequences.

We further urge whoever comes to power after February 18th, whatever their political party, to take action to address the increasing homophobia in the country and the outdated laws which underpin it. **The murder of David Kato, an activist in the cause of sexual minority rights, was not the first of its kind in Uganda. Please help us to ensure that it was the last.**

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