

STOP BULLYING: Ending Violence and Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

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Hello Everyone.

Background Information

As you may have heard, Nigeria's anti-gay marriage bill, which has already been presented to the Nigerian legislature three times before, has just reached the legislature for the fourth time. This time, however the proposed bill has come with some very disturbing additions, for instance banning same-sex marriage and threatening any Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT) individual who participates in Gay Clubs, Societies or Organizations with incarceration.

Why is this happening?

It's unfortunate that this is happening around Africa at this moment. The bill in Nigeria is being used as a distraction from an important economic situation all Nigerians are faced with. The bill has distracted people's attention from the real issues. Schools are going on strike; we have bad roads, and we have bad living conditions. People need subsidies in order to afford fuel, but the government is planning to get rid of the subsidies. Instead of talking about the immediate and real concerns of all Nigerians, people are focused on talking about the anti-gay bill.

What does the bill say?

The same sex marriage prohibition bill scaled through third reading on the 29th November 2011 at the Senate floor of the Nigeria National Assembly. The bill stipulates 14 years imprisonment for gay couples. The provisions of the bill disregard human rights of sexual minorities and would setback what could be the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals on health in respect to HIV prevention in Nigeria.

Sub-section 2 and 3 also stipulates fines for any person who either operates or participates in gay marriages and as well spells out punishments and fines for witnesses.¹

¹ "Any person, who registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organizations directly or indirectly makes public show of same sex amorous relationship in Nigeria commits an offence and shall each be liable on conviction to a term of 10 years in prison."

If enacted, how will this bill affect LGBT Nigerians?

If enacted, this bill will drive the LGBTI community underground and will promote bullying, blackmail, hate crime and gay bashing

How has this Bill affected me?

Since launching a campaign against this bill a few weeks ago, I have been receiving death threats by email and on my Facebook page from unknown Nigerians who are threatening to kill my Son. The bill has made me feel very unsafe, especially since I will be going back home next week after four months doing the Human Rights Advocates Program at Columbia University in New York. Because of this bill, my family and I are already unsafe.

What must we do now?

To combat this bill, we must call on the Nigerian Human Rights Commission to engage in dialogue with the legislators to express the adverse implications of the bill with regards to the protection of human rights of all Nigerians, especially in consideration of public health.

We must call on the National Agency on the Control of AIDS to engage in dialogue with the legislators, expressing the potential effect of the bill on the Millennium Development Goal of mitigating the impact of AIDS in Nigeria.

Finally, we must remind members of the National Assembly - Senate and House of Representatives - that this penal code is part of a colonial legacy and colonial imposition. We Nigerians are better than that. We Nigerians define our own country ourselves, with respect and love for all.

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For press inquiries, please contact Roberta Sklar, Press Secretary, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC): +1 - 917 - 704 - 6358.

"Any person or group of persons that witness, abet and aid the solemnization of a same sex marriage or civil union or supports the registration, operation and sustenance of gay clubs, societies, organizations, processions or meetings in Nigeria commit an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a term of ten years imprisonment."