

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SEXUAL MINORITIES UGANDA [SMUG] OUTRAGED BY THE CLOSURE OF LGBTI CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP BY THE STATE MINISTER OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY REV. FR. SIMON LOKODO

KAMPALA- February 15, 2012

Exactly one week after the re-tabling of the Anti Homosexuality Bill (2009) by MP David Bahati, a workshop organized by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) human rights defenders was invaded and shut down in Entebbe. The State Minister for Ethics and Integrity in the Office of the President, Rev. Fr. Simon Lokodo, in the company of an aide and the police, announced that the workshop was illegal and ordered the meeting to close immediately or else force would be used to end the meeting.

"I have closed this conference because it is illegal. We do not accept homosexuality in Uganda. So go back home," Mr Lokodo told the workshop participants.

SMUG condemns this outright abuse of office by the State Minister of Ethics and Integrity.

According to Frank Mugisha one of the Coordinators of the Capacity Development workshop and present at the time; "Closing our workshop today totally violates our constitutional rights and this intimidation will not stop us from fighting, for equal treatment of all Ugandan citizens." Frank Mugisha is the Executive Director of SMUG and 2011 Robert F Kennedy Human Rights Award Laureate

The Minister also ordered the arrest of Kasha Jacqueline Nabagasera, the Executive Director of Freedom and Roam Uganda and 2011 Laureate of the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders when she dared to challenge him for disrupting the workshop. Kasha with the help of colleagues was whisked out of the hotel to safety.

The State Minister's actions are illegal and in direct contravention of the Constitution of Uganda, The African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, among other international human rights covenants to which Uganda is a party. These human rights instruments all robustly promote and protect the rights to Freedom of Speech, Expression, Association, Peaceful Assembly and the Right to Information of all citizens and human beings, without discrimination.

Sexual Minorities Uganda strongly condemns this notorious and continuous attempt to prevent lawful and peaceful activities of human rights defenders in Uganda. Our campaign for equal rights is rooted in the fact that, as Ugandans, we are entitled to the respect and protection of the law just like all other Ugandans.

Actions:

1. We call on the Government of Uganda to protect the rights of citizens to peacefully assemble and associate as is guaranteed in our Constitution and in international human rights law.
2. We call on the Government of Uganda to protect all peoples within her borders against threats, violence and harassment by state and non-state actors, irrespective of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. We call on the Government and people of Uganda to reject the proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill which would only serve to further violate international human rights law and plant seeds of hate, intolerance and violence in Ugandan society.
4. We call on the Ugandan people to reject the government's move to use homosexuality issues to divert Ugandans' attention from the most pertinent issues that are affecting the nation.

ISSUED BY

Sexual Minorities Uganda - SMUG is a network of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex organizations based in Uganda. SMUG is the 2011 Laureate of The Rafto Prize.

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