



RAFTO

21/10/2019

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide  
Minister of International Development Dag Inge Ulstein  
Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Copy: Norwegian Ambassador to Uganda Elin Østebø Johansen

## **AD: APPEAL FOR VIGILANCE ON BEHALF OF THE LGBTIQ COMMUNITY IN UGANDA**

Dear Minister of Foreign Affairs Ms. Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide and Minister of International Development Mr. Dag Inge Ulstein,

We appeal to the Norwegian government to mobilize their best diplomatic efforts to contribute to calm down the ongoing wave of violence against LGBTIQ minorities in Uganda.

In 2014 a bill introducing capital punishment for repeated offence against the prohibition to engage in consensual gay sex among adults passed parliament, but was judged unconstitutional by the Ugandan Supreme Court on technical grounds, and without considering the substantial content of the bill. This bill is now relaunched, as announced on October 10 (Reuters <https://reut.rs/2BseBok>). The community of LGBTIQ rights defenders have issued this call to action in the face of this threat:

[https://twitter.com/NCHRD\\_UG/status/1185529291055675138/photo/1](https://twitter.com/NCHRD_UG/status/1185529291055675138/photo/1)

As warned by LGBTIQ activists such as our partner Pepe Julian Onziema of Rafto laureate 2011 Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), an increase in street violence against gays was expected after this announcement. Evidence that this prediction was correct is now accumulating. Already before the announcement of the renewal of the legislative initiative, LGBTIQ activist Brian Wasswa was murdered (Human Rights Watch <https://bit.ly/31ecEzi>), the fourth sexual minority person apparently murdered for reasons relating to their sexual or gender identity this year.

Saturday October 19, a lesbian woman was assaulted by her doctor upon informing him about her identity, <https://twitter.com/uhsपाuganda/status/1185621357679255552>. Sunday October 20, a gay Rwandan refugee was brutally attacked in Kampala, <https://twitter.com/uhsपाuganda/status/1186010485990285313>

Hate speech directed against LGBTIQ persons is rampant, an issue addressed by Rafto and SMUG in our 2018 publication "Speaking with Care - A Manual to Prevent, Mitigate, and Counter

Hate Speech Targeting Sexual and Gender Minorities in East Africa”, downloadable at <https://bit.ly/2WouK6x> .

Uganda has the 10th highest rate of HIV-infection in the world, a situation exacerbated by the stigma following identification as LGBTIQ, which prevents many from having their illness diagnosed in time to limit further contagion. <https://bit.ly/2MyUiEJ>

We would like to note that the persecution of this minority group not only violates their civil rights to free expression, organization, and assembly relating to their identity and interests as LGBTIQ. It also violates rights not relating to their sexual or gender identity, such as their right to health, life, and to privacy.

We would also like to note that opinions are split between aggressively homophobic and more moderate voices at the highest level of government in Uganda. Among the former are Minister of Ethics and Integrity Simon Lokodo, who announced the renewed proposal for capital punishment, and Minister for Security General Elly Tumwine, who has associated LGBTIQ activists with prominent opposition candidate for the next Presidential election, and named them participants in a terrorist conspiracy (Pink News UK, <https://bit.ly/35SzgZp>). Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has not confirmed his support for reintroducing the law. In so far as LGBTIQ activists are drawn into the upcoming Presidential and Parliamentary election campaigns, we must expect that the danger of violence will increase.

We ask you to make sure that the Norwegian position is known in all relevant communication with Ugandan authorities, and that the Norwegian and civil society organizations in Norway and like-minded countries will monitor the situation closely, and that we expect diplomatic representatives to defend the rights of this group as diligently as the rights off all other Ugandan citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt  
Executive Director  
Rafto Foundation for Human Rights