



National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

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PRESS STATEMENT: NGLHRC CONDEMNS GROSS VIOLATIONS AGAINST LGBTIQ PERSONS IN TANZANIA

The Tanzanian government's recent threats and actions to eradicate homosexuals in Tanzania have incited and created an environment of fear, hate, discrimination, violence and brutality towards the LGBTIQ community. Government efforts have included the indiscriminate arrests and detention of men suspected to be gay, public statements by the deputy health minister, Hamisi Kigwangalla, threatening to publish a "gay list" and a ban on HIV/Aids services at clinics suspected to be providing services to the LGBTIQI community, among other actions.

Since 2016, incidences of violence towards sexual and gender minorities have skyrocketed but go unreported because the authorities expressly refuse to extend protection to LGBTIQ persons. The government of Tanzania has arrested and subjected dozens of suspected gay men into forced anal testing to prove their sexual orientation and freedom to associate for LGBTIQ NGOs has been curtailed for months now. The state sponsored homophobia permeates into society, evidenced by videos of attacks against LGBTIQ going viral on social media platforms, with the perpetrators being applauded for 'eradicating homosexuals' instead of being held responsible for their criminal actions.



The latest manifestation of gay persecution is the closure of 40 HIV clinics, a ploy by the government to crack down on the LGBTQI+ community. Men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender persons and sex workers are heavily reliant on the clinics to get treatment and other sexual health services. Health Minister Umy Mwalimu in a press conference stated that *'We have suspended HIV/AIDS services in 40 clinics....after it was established that the centers were promoting homosexuality, which is against Tanzania's laws.'* This latest action has created a much more dangerous environment for these communities, and insurmountably increased their risk of HIV infection and the increase in HIV viral load for those who are HIV positive. These actions will surely lead to an increase in the HIV prevalence rates for key populations, which in turn will lead to higher HIV prevalence rates in the general population since many MSM, trans persons and sex workers also have heterosexual sexual relationships.

Currently, the Tanzanian Penal Code criminalizes homosexuality imposing a minimum 5 year prison sentence if found guilty. However, Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights recognizes the inherent dignity in every human being without distinction. Further, the equality and non-discrimination guarantee provided by the Constitution of Tanzania and international human rights law applies to all people, and therefore is applicable to sexual minorities indiscriminately. The rights of sexual minorities and gender minorities in Tanzania are human rights.

Consequently, the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) strongly condemns these actions and calls upon the Tanzanian government to reconsider the plight of those most vulnerable in society and to consider the larger need for reducing the HIV burden of Tanzania as a whole. We also call upon regional and international partners to continually push for change in the Tanzanian government's stance towards the LGBTIQ community.



We applaud LGBTIQ activists in Tanzania who continue to champion and strive to create a better environment for their community in Tanzania, despite the ongoing violence and brutality . NGLHRC stands in solidarity with the LGBTIQ community and all those who have been and are still affected by the anti-LGBTIQ campaign the Tanzanian government continues to pursue.

Sincerely,

Eric Gitari

Executive Director

If you have questions on this matter, contact us through: info@nglhrc.com or /+254204400525