



International Federation of Social Workers **Fédération Internationale des Travailleurs Sociaux** **Federación Internacional de Trabajadores sociales**

22nd December 2013

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi
State House Nakasero
email: info@statehouse.go.ug

Your Excellencies:

Representing social work in 116 countries, The International Federation of Social Workers, (IFSW), stands together with others around the world in calling for the immediate withdrawal of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill — which provides for a 14-year jail term for a first conviction and “imprisonment for life for the offense of aggravated homosexuality.

This law which was recently passed by the Ugandan Parliament concerning homosexuality and gay rights is a clear violation of international human rights conventions and should be withdrawn.

For the last three years, IFSW has followed with extreme concern the Bill that was recently passed by the Ugandan Parliament concerning homosexuality and we have remained steadfast in our opposition of its enactment.

IFSW respects the territorial integrity of national governments and does not usually seek to engage in debates about policies or legislation within individual countries however the regional and global risks to human rights arising from this legislation are such that our comment in opposition is required in this case.

This is especially the case during this the season of hope and reconciliation and we therefore, call upon you to immediately reject this measure and to use all of the power of your office to ensure that this bill is not implemented.

Both the United Nations and Members of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights have condemned laws that imprison lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals on the basis of their sexuality. Laws criminalizing homosexuality violate principles of privacy and equality, and in so doing, relegate LGBT persons to the status of “second-class” citizens - which may unofficially sanction harassment and violence against them.

This legislation not only violates the human rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Ugandan community, its provisions will also seriously undermine HIV prevention, treatment and care efforts in Uganda. In the past, Uganda's own HIV/AIDS experts have acknowledged that the “most-at-risk populations including men who have sex with men (MSMs) play a role in the occurrence of new infections in Uganda.

Moreover, despite their vulnerability to HIV infections, most at risk populations (MARPS) such as MSM are under serviced, and will remain so only increasing new infections.

IFSW, along with our global social work colleagues calls upon you to respect and uphold the international conventions and treaties which explicitly recognize the right of all individuals to give expression to their sexual orientation, among many other basic rights.

These global conventions and policies have been developed by common agreement and through experience and with scholarly research and are reflected in the global ethical principles of social work, endorsed by the IFSW and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW).

P.O. Box 6875 • 3001 Berne • Switzerland

We believe wholeheartedly that there is no further justification called for the right to freedom of sexual orientation, identity and expression, nor is any needed or appropriate. We call to your attention that the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki- Moon, the UN Human Rights Commissioner, Bishop Desmond Tutu and other world leaders have gone on record criticizing the implementation of this legislation and have adamantly advised against it based on its violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The world body of social workers wholeheartedly endorses those statements.

International policy and academic research have clearly documented that the expression of an individual's sexual orientation is indeed a human right. It is both without merit and an abuse of basic human rights to imply that the expression of sexual orientation and the abuse of children are the same or related. They are not.

The IFSW calls on you to reject this law which passed by the Ugandan Parliament. The law is cruel and its severe penalties and adversely targets friends and family of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Ugandans.

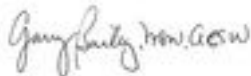
It should also be noted that laws targeting sexual minorities have been identified as obstacles to effectively addressing HIV in Uganda. Criminal penalties against the LGBT community also hinder HIV control efforts by creating a climate of fear and shame, driving sexual minorities underground where they are difficult to reach with HIV-related services and it is clear that those countries whose laws do not criminalize homosexuality are better able to curb the transmission of the virus.

A 2009 joint report by the Uganda AIDS Commission and UNAIDS specifically called for a review of legal impediments to the inclusion of most-at-risk-populations - including MSM (men who have sex with men)- in the national AIDS response This "anti-homosexuality" legislation goes directly against these expert public health recommendations.

Other provisions in the bill against 'promotion of homosexuality' are vague and alarming and could potentially be used to harass, fine or imprison individuals or non-governmental organizations providing life-saving HIV prevention education and other HIV-related services to sexual minorities.

Recognizing that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights, and in pursuit of our mutual endeavour for an adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we call upon you to provide the necessary leadership required to ensure that this law does not go into effect and that you work for its immediate withdrawal and any other bill that threatens the health and human rights of your citizens.

Sincerely,



Gary Bailey, HL.D(h.c),MSW,ACSW

President, International Federation of Social Workers

