

Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill

The Anti Homosexuality Bill, 2009



An Act to prohibit any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex; prohibit the promotion or recognition of such relations and to provide for other related matters.

Legislative history

Bill citation [The Anti Homosexuality Bill](#)
Bill published on 14 October 2009
Introduced by David Bahati

Summary

Broadens criminalisation of same-sex relations in Uganda



The [AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power](#) protests in [New York City](#) against the bill

The **Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill** (often called the "**Kill the Gays bill**" in the media due to the originally proposed death penalty clauses)^{[1][2][3][4]} was passed by the [Parliament of Uganda](#) on 20 December 2013 with the death penalty proposal dropped in favour of [life in prison](#). The bill must be signed by the [President of Uganda](#) before becoming law.^{[5][6]}

The legislative proposal would broaden the criminalisation of [same-sex relations](#) in Uganda domestically, and further includes provisions for Ugandans who engage in same-sex relations outside of Uganda, asserting that they may be [extradited](#) for punishment back to Uganda, and includes penalties for individuals, companies, media organisations, or [non-governmental organisations](#) that know of gay people or support [LGBT rights](#).

The private member's bill was submitted by [Member of Parliament David Bahati](#) on 14 October 2009. Same-sex relationships are currently illegal in Uganda—as they are in many sub-Saharan African countries—punishable by incarceration in prison for up to 14 years. A special motion to introduce the legislation was passed a month after a two-day conference was held in which three American Christians asserted that homosexuality is a direct threat to the cohesion of African families. Several sources have noted endemic [homophobia](#) in Uganda has been exacerbated by the bill and the associated discussions about it. ^{[[citation needed](#)]}

The bill, the government of Uganda, and the evangelicals involved have received significant international media attention as well as criticism and condemnation from many Western governments and those of other countries, some of whom have threatened to cut off financial aid to Uganda. The bill has also received protests from international LGBT, human rights, civil rights, and scientific organisations. In response to the attention, a revision was introduced to reduce the strongest penalties for the greatest offences to life imprisonment. Intense international reaction to the bill, with many media outlets characterising it as barbaric and abhorrent, caused President [Yoweri Museveni](#) to form a commission to investigate the implications of passing it. The bill was held for further discussion for most of 2010. In May 2011, parliament adjourned without voting on the bill; in October 2011 debate was re-opened.^{[[71](#)]} Bahati re-introduced the bill in February 2012.^{[[81](#)]}

In November 2012, Uganda agreed to pass a new law against homosexuality by the end of 2012 as a "Christmas gift" to its advocates, according to the speaker of parliament.^{[[91](#)]} Although the death penalty was originally planned to be included in the bill, the Legal Affairs Committee has reported verbally that there is the recommendation to drop the death penalty. The final version did not include the death penalty.

Background

According to human rights organisations, at least 500,000 gay people live in Uganda out of a total population of 31 million, though the government of Uganda contests that number as inflated; the BBC states that it is "impossible" to determine the actual number.^{[[101](#)]} Existing laws criminalise homosexual behavior with prison sentences lasting up to 14 years. These laws are [remnants of British colonialism](#) designed to punish what colonial authorities deemed "unnatural sex" among local Ugandan people.^{[[111](#)][[121](#)]} Although many societies in Africa and elsewhere view homosexuality as a decadent practice imported by outsiders, it existed before European colonisation, often varying in practice depending on individual cultures. In some, male homosexuality was age-stratified, similar to [ancient Greece](#) where warriors purchased boys as brides, common when women were not available, or manifested as fleeting encounters as in prostitution.^{[[131](#)]}

Despite this past, colonial influence has been pervasive; according to a reporter in Africa, "Africans see homosexuality as being both un-African and un-Christian".^{[[141](#)]} Thirty-eight of fifty-three African nations criminalise homosexuality in some way.^{[[121](#)]} In sub-Saharan Africa, the [government of South Africa](#) is the only official entity to [support LGBT rights](#), but even there [curative rape](#) is often^{[[citation needed](#)]} used against men and women (such as in the murder of [Eudy Simelane](#)), and sometimes met with police inaction and apathy^{[[citation needed](#)]}. Like the conditions in

many other African nations, gays in Uganda currently face an atmosphere of physical abuse, vandalism to their property, blackmail, death threats, and "correctional rape".^{[15][16]}

From 5 to 8 March 2009, a workshop took place in [Kampala](#), the capital of Uganda, that featured three American evangelical Christians: [Scott Lively](#), an author who has written several books opposing homosexuality; Caleb Lee Brundidge, a self-professed [former gay](#) man who conducts sessions to heal homosexuality; and Don Schmierer, a board member of [Exodus International](#), an organisation devoted to promoting "freedom from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ".^{[17][18]} The theme of the conference, according to *The New York Times*, was the "[gay agenda](#)": "how to make gay people straight, how gay men often sodomized teenage boys and how 'the gay movement is an evil institution' whose goal is 'to defeat the marriage-based society and replace it with a culture of sexual promiscuity' ".^[15] An [Anglican](#) priest from [Zambia](#) named Kapyra Kaoma was in attendance, and reported on the conference. Ugandan Stephen Langa organised it, and was supported by Lively, who asserted in his workshops that homosexuality was akin to child molestation and bestiality, and causes higher rates of divorce and HIV transmission. Lively's emphasis was on the cohesion of the African family, that he said was being threatened by "homosexuals looking to [recruit](#) youth into their ranks". According to Kaoma, during the conference, one of the thousands of Ugandans in attendance announced, "[The parliament] feels it is necessary to draft a new law that deals comprehensively with the issue of homosexuality and...takes into account the international gay agenda... Right now there is a proposal that a new law be drafted."^[19]

Overview of provisions

In April 2009, the Ugandan Parliament passed a resolution allowing [Member of Parliament](#) (MP) [David Bahati](#) to submit a [private member's bill](#) in October to strengthen laws against homosexuality.^[20] The bill was proposed on 13 October 2009 by Bahati and is based on the foundations of "strengthening the nation's capacity to deal with emerging internal and external threats to the traditional heterosexual family", that "same sex attraction is not an innate and immutable characteristic", and "protect[ing] the cherished culture of the people of Uganda, legal, religious, and traditional family values of the people of Uganda against the attempts of sexual rights activists seeking to impose their values of sexual promiscuity on the people of Uganda".^[1]

The bill divides homosexual behavior into two categories: "aggravated homosexuality", in which an offender would receive the [death penalty](#), or "the offence of homosexuality" in which an offender would receive [life imprisonment](#). "Aggravated homosexuality" is defined to include homosexual acts committed by a person who is [HIV](#)-positive, is a parent or authority figure, or who administers intoxicating substances, homosexual acts committed on minors or people with disabilities, and repeat offenders. "The offence of homosexuality" is defined to include same-sex sexual acts, involvement in a [same-sex marriage](#), or an attempt to commit aggravated homosexuality.

The legislation strengthens the criminalisation of [homosexuality](#) in Uganda by introducing the [death penalty](#) for people who are considered serial offenders, are suspected of "aggravated homosexuality" and are [HIV](#)-positive, or who engage in sexual acts with those under 18 years of age.^[1] People who are caught or suspected of homosexual activity will be forced to undergo HIV

tests; Ugandans who engage in same-sex sexual relations outside Uganda will likewise fall under the jurisdiction of this law, and may be [extradited](#) and charged with a felony. Furthermore, if passed, the bill will require anyone who is aware of an offence or an offender, including individuals, companies, media organisations, or [non-governmental organisations](#) who support [LGBT](#) rights, to report the offender within 24 hours. If an individual does not do so he or she is also considered an offender and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding 250 "currency points" or imprisonment up to three years.^[1]

Revision

At the time the bill was introduced, an independent MP stated he thought it had about a 99% chance of passing.^[21] Uganda's president [Yoweri Museveni](#) openly expressed his support for the bill, stating "We used to say Mr and Mrs, but now it is Mr and Mr. What is that now?"^[16] After facing intense international reaction and promises from Western nations to cut financial aid to Uganda, on 9 December 2009, Uganda's Minister of Ethics and Integrity [James Nsaba Buturo](#) said that Uganda will revise the bill to drop the death penalty (substituting life imprisonment) for gay people with multiple offences. Initially, however, Buturo stated Uganda's government was determined to pass the bill "even if meant withdrawing from international treaties and conventions such as the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and forgoing donor funding", according to an interview in [The Guardian](#).^{[16][22]} Since then, however, [The Guardian](#) has stated that David Bahati, the bill's sponsor, has denied these reports.^[20] On 23 December, [Reuters](#) reported that Buturo again said that the death penalty would be dropped from the bill. He claims, however, that the protest from the Western nations did not have an effect on this decision. He stated, "There have been a lot of discussions in government ... regarding the proposed law, but we now think a life sentence could be better because it gives room for offenders to be rehabilitated. Killing them might not be helpful."^[23]

On 8 January 2010, Bahati again asserted he would not postpone or shelve the bill, even after Minister of State for Investment [Aston Kajara](#) stated the Ugandan government would ask Bahati to withdraw it, and President Museveni asserted he thought it was too harsh. Bahati stated, "I will not withdraw it. We have our children in schools to protect against being recruited into (homosexuality). The process of legislating a law to protect our children against homosexuality and defending our family values must go on."^[24]

On 12 January 2010, President Museveni expressed to the media that there is need to exercise "extreme caution", and his cabinet members will speak to Bahati to reach a compromise to satisfy Bahati's concerns weighed with the calls he is receiving from throughout the world.^[25]

Current status

Parliament adjourned in May 2011 without voting on the bill; Bahati stated that he intended to re-introduce the bill in the new parliament.^{[26][27]} In August 2011, the cabinet discussed the bill, deciding unanimously that current laws making homosexuality illegal were sufficient.^[28] Parliament voted to reopen debate in October 2011, with Speaker Kadaga stating that the bill would be sent to committee.^[7] According to [Bloomberg News](#), President Museveni would

probably veto the bill under international pressure.^[29] Speaker of Parliament [Rebecca Kadaga](#) has vowed to pass the bill in 2012.^[30]

The bill is now listed as number eight under "Business to Follow" for 2013.^{[31][32]} At this stage, no changes to the bill have been presented.^[33] It has been reported that the members of the Ugandan Parliament are looking to hold debate behind closed doors. National Youth MP, Monica Amoding, told The Observer that some MPs on the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs committee proposed the move because of the sensitive nature of the bill. "This subject is very sensitive and some of us fear that if it is discussed in public view, we will be persecuted for holding particular views," Amoding said.^{[34][35]}

On December 20, 2013 the Uganda parliament passed an anti-homosexuality law with punishments up to life imprisonment. Not reporting gay people is also made a crime punishable with imprisonment.^[36]

Response

Within Uganda, gay and human rights advocates were alarmed. Before the proposed legislation, many had felt a gradual easing of enforcement of laws designed to punish people for homosexual behavior. [Amnesty International](#), however, reports that arrests of people suspected of having homosexual relations are arbitrary and detainees are subjected to torture and abuse by authorities.^[37] Within the latter part of 2009, many felt they must leave the country or go into hiding. Kapyia Kaoma characterized the attempts to portray homosexuals as a threat to the African family as especially egregious, putting people's lives in danger: "When you speak like that, Africans will fight to the death."^[15]

Apart from the legislation to punish homosexuals, [Ugandan human rights](#) have been a concern for Amnesty International, who highlighted issues such as threats to freedom of expression and association, and the use of torture by law enforcement, among their major concerns in their 2009 report.^[38] American evangelists active in Africa are being criticised for being responsible for inspiring the legislation by inciting hatred with excessive speech by comparing homosexuality to [paedophilia](#) and influencing public policy with donations from American religious organisations. Among the critics are [The Times](#),^[39] Jeffrey Gettleman in [The New York Times](#),^[15] [Time](#),^[40] PublicEye.org, [The Guardian](#),^[16] a pan-African internet news journal for social justice named [Pambazuka News](#),^[41] and an international organisation with a similar objective named [Inter Press Service](#).^{[42][note 1]}

American evangelicals such as [Scott Lively](#) and California pastor [Rick Warren](#) have a history of involvement in Uganda where they focus their missionary work. As a result, Warren and others have become influential in the shaping of public policy in Uganda, [Nigeria](#) and, to a lesser extent, [Kenya](#).^[19] Stephen Langa, the March 2009 workshop organiser, specifically cited an unlicensed [conversion therapist](#) named [Richard A. Cohen](#), who states in *Coming out Straight*, that was given to Langa and other prominent Ugandans,

Homosexuals are at least 12 times more likely to molest children than heterosexuals; homosexual teachers are at least 7 times more likely to molest a pupil; homosexual teachers are estimated to

have committed at least 25 percent of pupil molestation; 40 percent of molestation assaults were made by those who engage in homosexuality.

These statements were based on faulty studies performed by [Paul Cameron](#), who has been expelled from the [American Psychological Association](#), the [Canadian Psychological Association](#), and the [American Sociological Association](#), and Cohen confirmed their weaknesses, stating that when the book will be reprinted, these statistics will be removed.^{[43][44][45]}

Pambazuka News stated "It's worth noting that it costs a considerable amount of money, time and processes to table a private-member's bill, which begs the question of how the MP from Kabale District [Bahati] is financing this process? It has also been common practice for the mushrooming pastors and churches to use homophobic attacks on opponents as a way to discredit each other and sway faithfuls."^[41] [Martin Ssempe](#), a Ugandan pastor and former affiliate of Warren, has endorsed the bill.^[46] Warren however later publicly denounced the bill, calling it "un-Christian".^[47] In February 2010, to counter opposition to the bill, Ssempe showed gay pornography to 300 members of his church, shocking them with images of explicit sexual acts, and implying that all gay people engage in them, but straight people do not.^[48]

During March 2009, Scott Lively met with several legislators and Minister of Ethics and Integrity James Buturo. He followed his visit with a post to his blog saying that he was "overjoyed with the results of our efforts and predicted confidently that the coming weeks would see significant improvement in the moral climate of the nation, and a massive increase in pro-family activism in every social sphere. [Conference organiser Stephen Langa] said that a respected observer of society in Kampala had told him that our campaign was like a nuclear bomb against the 'gay' agenda in Uganda. I pray that this, and the predictions, are true."^[49] However, Lively has responded to the bill, saying "I agree with the general goal but this law is far too harsh... Society should actively discourage all sex outside of marriage and that includes homosexuality ... The family is under threat... [Gay people] should not be parading around the streets."^[50] Lively has said the bill is a reaction to attempts by Americans and Europeans to "homosexualize" Ugandan society. He further claimed that Ugandan leaders who created the bill are worried about "the many male homosexuals coming in to the country and abusing boys who are on the streets".^[51] Richard Cohen has stated he condemns the bill, and that the punitive measures in it are "incomprehensible".^[45] Don Schmierer expressed his shock at the legislation, telling *The New York Times* that although he outlined how homosexuals could change to heterosexual in the March 2009 conference, his involvement was limited to giving seminars to Africans about better parenting skills: "[The bill is] horrible, absolutely horrible... Some of the nicest people I have ever met are gay people."^[15]

On 22 December 2009, several hundred people gathered in Kampala to show their support for the bill, protesting against homosexuals. Deutsche Presse-Agentur reports, "The protesters, led by [born-again](#) clerics, cultural leaders, and university undergraduates, marched to the parliament where they presented a petition."^[52]

On 11 January 2010, Uganda's Media Centre, a government-sponsored website, released a statement titled "Uganda is being judged too harshly", reacting to the worldwide media attention the country has received about the bill, stating that, in response to the negative press they have

received, it is obvious that "Ugandans (read Africans) have no right to discuss and no right to sovereignty". The message asserted "It is unfortunate that Uganda is now being judged on the actions of opportunists whose ideas are based on violence and blackmail and even worse, on the actions of aid attached strings. (Homosexuality). It is regrettable that government is pretentiously expected to observe their 'human rights', yet, by their own actions, they have surrendered their right to human rights."^[53]

Outing gay people in the media

In April 2009, a local Ugandan newspaper printed the names of suspected homosexuals, another printed tips on how to identify gays for the general public,^[54] and, in October 2010, another named *Rolling Stone* (unaffiliated with the American *Rolling Stone*) published a story featuring a list of the nation's 100 "top" gays and lesbians with their photos and addresses. Next to the list was a yellow strip with the words "hang them". Julian Pepe, a program coordinator for [Sexual Minorities Uganda](#), said people named in the story are living in fear and attacks have begun prompting many to abandon their jobs while some have relocated. The paper's editor justified the list to expose gays and lesbians so authorities could arrest them, while Nsaba Buturo dismissed complaints from gay people and sympathisers by stating that protests about the outing is part of a campaign to mobilise support and sympathy from outside the country.^{[55][56]}

On 26 January 2011, Uganda's most prominent gay activist, [David Kato](#), was found bludgeoned to death in what authorities in Uganda are characterising as a robbery. His photograph had been published in *Rolling Stone*; the high court in the country ordered the newspaper to stop publishing images of gay and lesbian people after Kato and several others sued the paper.^[57] Kato spoke at a United Nations-sponsored conference on the bill in December 2009. His words were barely audible because he was nervous; information in U.S. embassy cables revealed that Ugandan human rights activists and anti-homosexuality bill supporters vocally mocked him during his presentation. The U.S. diplomat reporting, whose communiques were exposed through [Wikileaks](#), wrote that the political and economic problems in Uganda were being channeled into "violent hatred" of gay people, and David Bahati, [Martin Ssempe](#) and James Buturo were primarily responsible for promoting the wave of intolerance. The diplomat further stated that, even if the bill does not pass in Ugandan parliament, "rampant homophobia in Uganda won't go away".^[58]

International governments

Several leaders from other nations have expressed their concerns. On 27 November 2009, during the [Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting](#), [Gordon Brown](#), the then [Prime Minister of the United Kingdom](#), expressed his opposition of the bill to Uganda president Yoweri Museveni.^[59] [Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper](#) also expressed opposition privately to Museveni during the Commonwealth leaders' meeting. The Canadian Transport Minister [John Baird](#) stated to *The Globe and Mail*, "The current legislation before Parliament in Uganda is vile, it's abhorrent. It's offensive. It offends Canadian values. It offends decency."^[60] Australia's government reiterated its opposition to the criminalisation of homosexuality in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but as of 8 January 2010 had not made a statement to the Ugandan government, despite activists' efforts for it to do so.^[61]

On 8 October 2011, [Andrew Mitchell](#), the UK's [Secretary of State for International Development](#), announced that African countries that persecute homosexuals will face cuts in financial aid from the British government. Mitchell specifically warned Museveni that his country faced reductions in aid unless it abandons the bill.^[62]

The government of [France](#) has also criticised the bill, citing a "deep concern".^[63] The European Parliament on 16 December 2009 passed a resolution against the bill, which threatens to cut financial aid to Uganda.^[64] On 3 December 2009 the [Swedish government](#), which has had a long-term relationship with Uganda, said that it would revoke its \$50 million (£31 million) [development aid](#) to Uganda if the bill passes, calling it "appalling". Sweden's Development Assistance Minister [Gunilla Carlsson](#) stated that she "thought and hoped we had started to share common values and understanding".^[65] [Dirk Niebel](#), the [Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development](#) in [Germany](#), told [Deutsche Presse-Agentur](#) that financial aid to Uganda will be cut, a stepwise plan for this has already been made.^[66] In December 2009, the neighbouring countries of [Rwanda](#) and [Burundi](#) also discussed legislation that would criminalise homosexuality.^[14]

The [White House](#) released a statement to [The Advocate](#), stating that United States president [Barack Obama](#) "strongly opposes efforts, such as the draft law pending in Uganda, that would criminalize homosexuality and move against the tide of history".^[67] [Secretary of State Hillary Clinton](#) has expressed her opposition of the bill and U.S. congressmen [Tom Coburn](#) (R-OK), [Russ Feingold](#) (D-WI), [Tammy Baldwin](#) (D-WI), and [Ileana Ros-Lehtinen](#) (R-FL) have likewise stated theirs.^[68]

The [Welsh Assembly Government](#) says that it will not cut its £75,000 aid to Uganda, despite objection of the bill. Welsh officials state that the aid is for the city of [Mbale](#) and not the Ugandan government.^[69]

In [Minneapolis, Minnesota](#), Kampala's sister city, the city council passed a resolution opposing the bill.^[70]

Religious and human rights organizations

Several Christian organizations oppose it, including the [Roman Catholic Church](#), the [Anglican Church of Canada](#), Integrity Uganda, Exodus International, Accepting Evangelicals, Changing Attitude, [Courage](#), [Ekklesia](#), [Fulcrum](#), Inclusive Church and the [Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement](#). [Exodus International](#) sent a letter to President Museveni stating, "The Christian church ... must be permitted to extend the love and compassion of Christ to all. We believe that this legislation would make this mission a difficult if not impossible task to carry out."^[71] A group of U.S. Christian leaders have released a statement to Uganda about the bill, one of these leaders being [Thomas Patrick Melady](#), former U.S. Ambassador to Uganda.^[72] The Anglican Reverend [Canon Gideon Byamugisha](#) said that the Bill "would become state-legislated genocide".^[73]

Following private discussions with the Ugandan Anglican Church, the [Archbishop of Canterbury](#) Dr. Rowan Williams has said in a public interview that he did not see how any Anglican could

support it: "Overall, the proposed legislation is of shocking severity and I can't see how it could be supported by any Anglican who is committed to what the Communion has said in recent decades. Apart from invoking the death penalty, it makes pastoral care impossible – it seeks to turn pastors into informers."^[74]

Divisions emerged in the [Anglican](#) community however. In response to the Anglican Church of Canada intervention, the Bishop of Karamoja Diocese, Joseph Abura, wrote an editorial saying, "Ugandan Parliament, the watch dog of our laws, please go ahead and put the anti-Gay laws in place. It is then that we become truly accountable to our young and to this country, not to Canada or England. We are in charge!"^[75] While the Anglican Church in Uganda opposes the death penalty, its archbishop, [Henry Luke Orombi](#), has not taken a position on the bill.^[76] Some individuals within the Anglican church, such as retired bishop [Christopher Senyonjo](#), from the West [Buganda](#) diocese, have been vocally opposed to the bill and supportive of LGBT rights in Uganda. In 2010, Bishop Senyonjo was touring the United States to draw attention to the bill.^[32]

Evangelical organisation [Andrew Wommack](#) Ministries declared support for the bill. "I knew this information was wrong and the punishments were vastly exaggerated as is so often the case. I met with the member of parliament responsible for this bill and he gave me his reasoning for introducing this legislation. [Uganda](#) had just had the [United Nations](#) try to pressure them into passing pro-homosexual legislation in order to obtain a large sum of money offered to them (a bribe). They responded with this legislation in order to stop the strong arm tactics of the pro-homosexual western influence. Would to God American leaders had enough integrity to not be bribed or badgered into compliance. Although I knew the situation was being misrepresented, I didn't feel qualified to deal with this personally. But Leland Shores who runs our office in Kampala, Uganda is well aware of the details and has written a response worthy of everyone who has an interest in this reading. He has included a letter from over 200 Ugandan Christian leaders explaining the situation."^{[77][78]}

Uganda's [Catholic](#) Archbishop of Kampala Cyprian Lwanga stated in December 2009 that the bill was unnecessary and "at odds with the core values" of Christianity, expressing particular concerns at the death penalty provisions. Lwanga argued that instead homosexuals should be encouraged to seek rehabilitation.^[79] For its part, the [Holy See](#) has maintained excellent relations with Uganda, with [Pope Benedict XVI](#) receiving the Ugandan ambassador in December 2009 and commending the climate of freedom and respect in the country towards the Catholic Church. During this meeting, there was no mention of the anti-homosexuality bill.^[80] However, three days earlier the Vatican legal attaché to the United Nations stated that "Pope Benedict is opposed to 'unjust discrimination' against gay men and lesbians".^[81]

The [United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), [Navi Pillay](#), urged Uganda to shelve the bill and decriminalise homosexuality.^[82] Amnesty International and [Human Rights Watch](#) have condemned the bill, calling it a product of a campaign by evangelical churches and anti-gay groups that has led to death threats and physical assaults against Ugandans suspected of being gay.^{[1][37]} [John Nagenda](#), Senior Presidential Advisor to the president of Uganda, has expressed that he does not think the bill should be passed.^[68] [The Global Fund to Fight AIDS](#) has stated that excluding marginalised groups would compromise efforts to stop the spread of AIDS in Uganda where 5.4% of the adult population is infected with HIV.^{[40][83]} Elizabeth Mataka, the

U.N. Special Envoy on AIDS in Africa expressed her concern with the bill as it will dissuade people from getting tested for HIV if they will subsequently be punished with the death penalty.^[54] Uganda experienced a rare and very successful drop in HIV transmission in the 1990s.^[84] The 16,000 members of the HIV Clinicians Society of Southern Africa sent a letter to the Ugandan president stating, "Encouraging openness and combating stigma are widely recognized as key components of Uganda's successful campaign to reduce HIV infection" and the bill threatens to enact a "profoundly negative impact on Uganda's efforts to combat HIV".^[85]

Media

One of the first newspaper editorials condemning the nature of the bill was from the South African paper [The Sunday Times](#), which warned Uganda is in danger of being "dragged back to the dark and evil days of [Idi Amin](#)".^[86] The UK newspaper [The Guardian](#) has said that the bill confirms the country's status as "unjust and infamous", calling the law a "wretched piece of legislation".^[87] London-based newspaper [The Times](#) also criticised the proposed law and the BBC for sponsoring a debate titled "Should homosexuals face execution?" [The Times](#) commended recent headway in Uganda's banning [female genital mutilation](#), but stated that the anti-homosexuality bill "...must be seen for what it is: a bigoted and inhumane Bill that will cause suffering for thousands of innocent people".^[39] [The Irish Times](#) similarly characterised the bill as "medieval and witch-hunting" and stated that even with the change from the death penalty to life imprisonment, "will remain utterly abhorrent".^[88]

American television host [Rachel Maddow](#), who is openly gay, has been running a continuing segment on the bill, entitled "Uganda Be Kidding Me" on [The Rachel Maddow Show](#).^[89] Maddow asserted that Richard Cohen had "blood on [his] hands" for providing the false inspiration for the legislation.^[45] She has also questioned the truth in Pastor Rick Warren's statements when he said in an interview "...it is not my political calling, as a pastor in America, to comment or interfere in the political process of other nations",.^[46] Maddow highlights his actions supporting Uganda's break with the Anglican Church for being "pro-gay", and asserts Warren has contradicted his condemnation of its anti-homosexuality bill.^[90] Lisa Miller in [Newsweek](#) likewise cast aspersions on Warren's actions.^[46]

An editorial in [The New York Times](#) stated, "The United States and others need to make clear to the Ugandan government that such barbarism (in the bill) is intolerable and will make it an international pariah" and chastised evangelicals for stirring hatred: "You can't preach hate and not accept responsibility for the way that hate is manifested."^[91] Similarly, [The Washington Post](#) wrote that the bill is "ugly and ignorant", "barbaric", and "(t)hat it is even being considered puts Uganda beyond the pale of civilized nations".^[92] Douglas Foster, writing in [The Los Angeles Times](#), focused on the paradox of the majority of Africans' belief that homosexuality as a Western affectation while simultaneously being influenced by American conservative evangelical dogma. He wrote that gay Africans face an "impossible, insulting, ahistorical, cruel and utterly false choice" of having to choose between being gay and being African.^[93]

[The Observer](#), a Ugandan bi-weekly newspaper, printed a response to the international attention the bill is getting by stating homosexuality is not a right, not included in the U.N.'s [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and in the U.S., where much of the media attention originates, still

remains controversial. It furthermore criticised the disparate reaction to other human rights violations and genocide in Uganda's history that did not attract the same amount of attention. It went on to state "... this is my major discomfort with homosexuality—it is not emerging naturally but rather as a result of intense campaigns in schools, luring people with money and all sorts of falsehoods ... Gays target other people's children because they don't have their own to enlist. Advocates of homosexuality should think about the broader impact of their crusade. Homosexuality destroys man's capacity for procreation, the taste of human life and eventually life itself."^[94] An editorial in *The Australian*, read "It would be wrong ... to believe that the Ugandan case is simply a matter of national self-determination clashing with Western sensibilities", and stated that it is [cultural relativism](#) at play in Uganda, not [pluralism](#) that is at the root of human rights violations such as the ones in the proposed legislation there. However, similar to *The Observer*, *The Australian* stated, "It is easy to stand up for universal values of liberty against a small nation in east Africa; yet are we prepared to do so against more formidable powers that abuse the human rights of their citizens?"^[95]

See also

Notes

1. [Jump up](#) ^ See also editorials addressing US evangelist influence in Africa from Australian newspaper *The Age*: "It used to be easy to identify homophobia. But now even homophobes fail to recognise their prejudice. Bigotry is reassuringly cosseted by an evangelising rhetoric of love, and reinforced by a medicalising language that veils the savagery of its aims." (Phoon, Adrian [11 January 2010]. [The role of US evangelists in Uganda's 'kill the gays' bill](#), *The Age*. Retrieved 11 January 2010.); openly gay [libertarian conservative](#) columnist [Andrew Sullivan](#) asked of the evangelists "... now that they have unleashed a proto-fascist pogrom against gay, bi and trans people in Africa, have they finally come to terms with the actual consequences of what they actually believe?" (Sullivan, Andrew [4 January 2010]. [American Christianity In Africa](#), *The Daily Dish*. Retrieved on 11 January 2010.); a Kenyan journalism professor writing for *New America Media* wrote of the poverty and still-present effects of colonialism that translates into black Africans' collective feelings of inferiority to whites with money that makes them susceptible to Western influence: "...American evangelicals are going to Africa to satisfy that calling. Is there a better place to create Christian nations than in a continent with nearly 500 million impoverished believers, and easily corruptible governments?" (Okong'o, Edwin [12 January 2010]. [Why Ugandans Embrace U.S. Christian Right's Anti-Gay Agenda](#), *New America Media*. Retrieved on 12 January 2010.); *The Seattle Times* wrote, "The three evangelists are an embarrassment to the Christian faith and the values that inspire selfless, hardworking missionaries to work in the far corners of the Earth to help people and truly change their lives." ([A malicious blasphemy in Uganda](#), *The Seattle Times* [7 January 2010]. Retrieved on 12 January 2010.)

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