



# INFORM



**THE OBSERVATORY**  
for the Protection of Human Rights  
Defenders

a joint programme



**Women living under muslim laws**  
**النساء في ظل قوانين المسلمين**  
**Femmes sous lois musulmanes**



Members of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition deplore the systematic discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and activists in Uganda. Such abuses violate fundamental human rights and endanger the lives of human rights defenders, including sexual rights defenders, in the country.

In several acts since March 2009, right-wing religious and anti-gay groups have verbally attacked LGBT persons, by charging them with recruiting children into homosexuality; issuing slanderous remarks; and exposing in the media the names, places of employment and photos of more than 100 people suspected to be LGBT, including several LGBT rights defenders. An article in the leading tabloid *The Red Pepper* claimed to be exposing "Uganda's shameless men and unabashed women that have deliberately exported the western evils to our dear and sacred society." The strategic manipulation of prejudices about sexuality, known as *sexuality baiting*, is a dangerous practice that promotes negative stereotyping of LGBT persons and activists, increasing their vulnerability to acts of violence motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity in Uganda.

Moreover, it is alarming that government officials have adopted similar rhetoric. *The New Vision*, a Ugandan newspaper, reported that Chief Parliamentarian David Migereko stated that gays had exposed themselves, and the government would go after them.

“Homosexuality is illegal. The Minister of Ethics, Dr. Nsabu Butoro, has been clear on the matter. Those involved will face the long arm of the law.”

The state’s discriminatory actions go beyond rhetoric. The police arrested at least five men on charges related to homosexual conduct. Most have been charged with having “carnal knowledge against the order of nature,” and one of the detainees has been charged with assaulting a minor and aggravated defilement, subject to the death penalty.

Such discriminatory acts against LGBT and sexual rights defenders committed by state and private actors violate the freedom from discrimination enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Additionally, the criminalization of homosexuality is contrary to Uganda’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which protects the rights to freedom from discrimination (art. 2 and 26), freedom of expression (art. 19), freedom from arbitrary interference with the right to privacy (art. 17) and freedom of conscience (article 18). These acts are also contrary to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which protects the human rights and freedoms of human rights defenders.

Members of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition call on the Government of Uganda to:

- Adopt necessary legislation decriminalizing homosexuality in Uganda;
- Uphold the human rights of LGBT persons and LGBT rights defenders and cease negative stereotyping of the LGBT community;
- Stop the arrests of people based on their suspected homosexual sexual orientation and immediately release those who have been unfairly arrested on charges related to consensual same-sex relationships;
- End efforts to increase penalties for consensual same-sex relationships, or what is being referred to as ‘homosexual recruitment.’