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CAMBODIAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



No. 00083/...../CCHR
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Letter to the Ugandan High Commission in London calling on the Ugandan Government to bring those responsible for the death of David Kato to justice and to foment a culture of tolerance in Uganda

Thursday, 3 February 2011

High Commissioner H.E. Mrs Joan Rwabyomere,
Ugandan High Commission,
Uganda House,
58-59 Trafalgar Square,
London WC2N 5DX,
United Kingdom

Dear H.E. Mrs Joan Rwabyomere,

I write in response to the appalling news that the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender ("LGBT") activist, David Kato, was brutally murdered in his home on 27 January 2011. Mr Kato dedicated his life to fighting for LGBT rights in Uganda and paid the ultimate penalty for his courage. While all murders are profoundly disturbing, both for the victims' families and the communities in which they live, they are especially so when they form part of a trend and result from discrimination.

LGBT people suffer severe discrimination in Uganda: homosexual sex is already illegal, while, according to Human Rights Watch, a draft anti-homosexuality bill, currently under review, will criminalise all homosexuality and make it punishable by life imprisonment. "Repeat offenders" and those with HIV will be liable to the death penalty. Furthermore, those with knowledge of someone who is or might be LGBT will be obliged to report them to the police within 24 hours. With such policies stemming directly from the government and the law-makers, it is no surprise that LGBT people are suffering such brutal violence in Uganda.

LGBT people are human beings, and should therefore be able to live free of discrimination, harassment, intimidation and violence, as other human beings are. They should be entitled to the full range of human rights, including the right to life. LGBT activists are especially at risk, as the tragic murder of Mr Kato shows.

We, the Cambodian Center for Human Rights ("CCHR"), conduct our own LGBT project to empower LGBT people throughout the country to stand up to discrimination and to advocate for their own rights. CCHR calls upon the Ugandan government to take responsibility for the current climate of anti-LGBT discrimination and violence, repeal its repressive laws, and do its utmost to instil a change of attitude towards LGBT people in Uganda. In the meantime, CCHR mourns the loss of Mr Kato, and hopes that those responsible will be brought to justice.



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