



Joint Working Group
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23 November 2010

Media Release

South Africa's vote at the UN undermines its own Constitution

South Africa was one of the 79 countries at the United Nations General Assembly who voted in favour of an amendment which removes sexual orientation from an anti-execution resolution. The vast majority of countries who supported the amendment were African and also included Angola, Botswana, Kenya, Namibia and Rwanda.

The amendment called for the words "sexual orientation" to be replaced by "discriminatory reasons on any basis" and is voted on by the UN General Assembly every two years. For the last ten years sexual orientation was explicitly referred to in the resolution that condemns extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions and other killings.

"The continued treatment of LGBTI(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) people as second class citizens in our countries and on the world stage by our government representatives is shameful and a disgrace. The vote basically means my life is worthless. We will not rest until the full liberation of LGBTI people in South Africa and the world is achieved. We will not rest until there is a South African government in place that recognises the multiple identities and realities of all its citizens. Full citizenship for all," says Phumi Mtetwa of the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project.

The South African LGBTI organisation, Gay Umbrella, also expressed their concern that the South African Government "...does not practice what it preaches" when it comes to LGBT rights. "The recent vote at the UN is a warning sign that LGBT rights in South Africa are not guaranteed and we will do everything in our power to mobilise our members to stand strong to protect their rights," they said in a statement released recently.

"South Africa voted to remove sexual orientation from this resolution, effectively disempowering activists to lobby against laws dealing with hate crimes against gender variant people. This hateful act is a stab in the back by those we trust to lead us!" said Robert Hamblin, Advocacy Manager and Deputy Director of Gender Dynamix in South Africa.

Carey Alan Johnson of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) also described the vote as a "...dangerous and disturbing development" because it removes the important acknowledgement of the vulnerability faced by LGBT people.

South Africa's leaders should be acting in a manner that is consistent with South Africa's constitutional values of non-discrimination, which expressly recognise and names sexual orientation as a ground for specific protection. Members of the Joint Working Group (JWG) demand to know why our leaders and the African National Congress fail to honour their mandate.

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The JWG comprises of the following organisations

ACTIVATE Wits
Behind the Mask
Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre
Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW)
Gay & Lesbian Network
Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)
Gender DynamiX
Glorious Light Metropolitan Community Church
Good Hope Metropolitan Community Church
Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church
Intersex South Africa
Jewish OutLook
Out in Africa Gay and Lesbian Film Festival
OUT LGBT Well-being
Rainbow UCT
South African Youth Liberating Organisation (SAYLO)
The Inner Circle
The Lesbian and Gay Equality Project (LGEP)
Triangle Project
UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology
XX/Y Flame