

IGLHRC Demands Investigation into Killing of Ugandan LGBT Rights Defender

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Cape Town, January 27, 2010) The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) stands in solidarity with Uganda's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in strongly condemning yesterday's killing of human rights defender David Kato. IGLHRC joins groups across the world to demand that the Ugandan government immediately denounce David's murder, thoroughly and impartially investigate this heinous crime and ensure the safety of all LGBT Ugandans.

"We are shocked and saddened by the news of the murder of David Kato," said Cary Alan Johnson, IGLHRC Executive Director. "David was an important leader of the Ugandan and East African LGBT movement. While the circumstances of David's death are not fully clear, I have no doubt that homophobia in its many vicious forms is responsible for his tragic death."

David Kato died on his way to hospital after being severely beaten in his home on the afternoon of 26 January 2011.

While the perpetrator for this killing is not yet known, his death comes in the wake of threats Kato received and alongside violence and intimidation that LGBT individuals and their supporters have suffered. It highlights the grave safety and security dangers confronting the Ugandan LGBT community and those working in defence of human rights. In the most recent incident of incitement to homophobic violence, the faces, names and addresses of "alleged homosexuals" were published under the headline "Hang Them" by a local tabloid, *Rolling Stone* (unrelated to the US publication). On 3 January 2011, Kato, whose face was on the tabloid's cover, and two other plaintiffs won a lawsuit against the publication. The Supreme Court of Uganda found that their privacy had been violated, ordering compensation and an injunction against future similar publication. In recent days, in addition to Kato, the two other plaintiffs in the *Rolling Stone* case have also been subjected to violence, raising concern that they have been targeted because of this case and remain in grave danger.

The tabloid's call for "death for all homosexuals in Uganda" is part of the larger human rights crisis for LGBT people in the country. Kato, as advocacy officer of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), was active in the fight against the ["Anti-Homosexuality Bill" proposed in Uganda's parliament in October 2009](#) and still pending.

IGLHRC calls upon the government of Uganda to publicly condemn Kato's murder, carry out a full and fair investigation into his death, and prosecute the perpetrator to the fullest extent of the law. Additionally, Ugandan authorities should provide police protection to LGBT human rights defenders who want it, particularly at their homes and offices.

“This tragedy was predictable. We warned the Ugandan government that its inaction would result in tragedy, and this horrific warning has now come true,” said Johnson. “The Ugandan government can be silent no longer. No Ugandan should be at risk of loss of life, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

For an overview of LGBT human rights in Uganda, see the 2010 shadow report to the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) [jointly submitted by IGLHRC and Freedom and Roam Uganda \(FARUG\)](#).