



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE – COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

For immediate release

Geneva, 27 January 2011

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today deplored the violent killing yesterday of David Kato, a Ugandan human rights defender and LGBT activist. The ICJ called on the Ugandan authorities to take immediate steps to investigate the crime and to bring those responsible to justice in a fair trial.

A teacher by training, David Kato was one of the founding members of Sexual Minorities of Uganda. As SMUG's advocacy and litigation officer, he had been a key figure in the fight against the forces of homophobia, hatred and intolerance sweeping his country. In the months before his killing, Kato had received death threats and he lived in fear for his safety. He was severely beaten at his home in Mukono District, outside Kampala, by an unknown assailant.

When M.P David Bahati introduced the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in the Ugandan Parliament in October 2009, which would have imposed the death penalty for certain same-sex sexual offenses, Kato helped to coordinate civil society opposition. When a Ugandan tabloid (*Rolling Stone*) unleashed a deliberate campaign of terror against the LGBT community by publishing the names, photographs and addresses of "Uganda's top homos" with the headline "Hang Them," Kato and two other activists successfully sued the newspaper in the High Court of Uganda. On 3 January 2011, the Court found that the newspaper had violated the plaintiffs' constitutional rights to dignity and privacy and issued a permanent injunction.

"David Kato was a deeply dedicated and courageous human rights activist," said Alli Jernow, Senior Legal Advisor at the International Commission of Jurists. "He was also a warm and thoughtful soul. He will be deeply missed."

The ICJ recalls the words of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addressing the UN Human Rights Council just a few days ago in Geneva: "We must reject persecution of people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity ... They may not have popular or political support, but they deserve our support in safeguarding their fundamental human rights."

The ICJ calls attention to the alarming wave of attacks on LGBT human rights defenders, not only in Uganda, but elsewhere. The ICJ calls upon the Government to take the necessary steps to ensure that LGBT individuals are protected from violence and incitement to violence. The ICJ further urges Ugandan authorities to immediately and forcefully speak out against hateful and inflammatory rhetoric. As the Secretary-General has reminded us, human rights are universal. They belong to all of us simply by virtue of being born human.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising fifty-two of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

33, rue des Bains, P.O. Box 91, 1211 Geneva 8, Switzerland
Tel: +41(0) 22 979 3800 – Fax: +41(0) 22 979 3801 – Website: <http://www.icj.org> - E-mail: info@icj.org

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