

Christian Leaders Criticize Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill

✖ **Updated:** In a statement released Thursday, Saddleback pastor Rick Warren denounced a Ugandan bill that would make homosexual behavior punishable by death in some cases.

He encouraged Ugandan pastors to speak out against the proposed measure, calling it “unjust, extreme and un-Christian toward homosexuals.”

(Photo: Uganda Parliament)

He said the bill would force pastors to report their pastoral conversations with homosexuals to authorities, and would have a “chilling effect” on Ugandan compassion ministry.

“If this bill passed, homosexuals who are HIV positive will be reluctant to seek or receive care, comfort and compassion from our churches out of fear of being reported,” he wrote. “You and I know that the churches of Uganda are the truly caring communities where people receive hope and help, not condemnation.”

Warren joins a cross-section of Christian leaders in denouncing the proposed anti-homosexuality bill—including proponents of a charismatic teaching some claim influenced the African Christians who support the measure.

Dozens of Christian leaders signed on to a statement released Monday decrying Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009, which would impose the death penalty for some homosexual behavior and up to seven years in jail for those who fail to report homosexual activity to authorities.

“Our Christian faith recognizes violence, harassment and unjust treatment of any human being as a betrayal of Jesus’

commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves," the joint statement read.

Signatories included Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners; the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference; and Thomas P. Melady, former U.S. ambassador to Uganda and the Vatican.

The ex-gay ministry Exodus International, the Clinical Advisory Board of the American Association of Christian Counselors, and Moody Bible Institute adjunct instructor Christopher Yuan made similar comments last month in a letter sent to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

Despite the denunciation by several Christian leaders, some observers say Christians are to blame for the proposed measure.

Media reports have linked the introduction of the bill to a March conference in Uganda, where three American ministers condemned homosexual behavior and advocated therapy for same-sex attraction.

The three men—Caleb Brundidge of the International Healing Foundation, who works with Patricia King's Extreme Prophetic ministry; Scott Lively of Abiding Truth Ministries and Don Schmierer of Exodus International—have said they do not support "harsh" treatment of homosexuals.

Other observers claim the bill may be the result of charismatic teaching on the seven mountains of cultural influence. Popularized by such leaders as Texas Bible teacher Lance Wallnau and pastor Johnny Enlow of Daystar Church in Atlanta, the teaching exhorts Christians to build God's kingdom by taking dominion in the areas of business, government, religion, family, media, education and entertainment.

In a blog posting, Christian counselor Warren Throckmorton noted that Ugandan Bishop Julius Oyet, founder of Life Line Ministries and a strong supporter of the bill, included possessing the seven mountains of culture as part of a 16-year ministry vision he outlined in 2004.

Oyet, also head of the Born Again Faith Federation, which

claims more than 10,000 affiliated churches, reportedly prayed with fellow Ugandan pastor Martin Ssempe outside Parliament after the anti-homosexuality bill was introduced in October, thanking God that Uganda would not be destroyed because its leaders were in obedience to God on the issue.

"I think that the theological soil for at least some of the proponents is that a nation's laws about private consensual behavior must reflect Christian teaching in order for the culture to be preserved, reclaimed and reformed," Throckmorton wrote.

"American teachers are exhorting their followers that national salvation is more vital to the mission of the church than individual salvation. Ideas have consequences. If the Ugandan believers viewed individual salvation as more vital, I wonder if the Ugandan proposal would have been advanced."

Enlow, author of *The Seven Mountain Prophecy*, said he opposes harsh punishments for homosexual behavior between consenting adults and said "government-sponsored witch hunts" would "not express the heart of God toward homosexuals."

But he said criminalizing homosexuality could be necessary "when the moral fiber of society has become so degraded that society itself is in need of knowing right and wrong."

"Society does need to know that homosexual behavior is wrong, but it would not be defensible to execute homosexuals any more than it would be to execute rebellious children—which is espoused to some measure in Leviticus," he wrote in a statement posted on Throckmorton's blog.

"There is a greater grace assigned to the new covenant understanding of the New Testament. Rebellious children are still wrong in their rebellion and homosexuals are still wrong in their behavior, but we do not need the extreme punishments of the Old Testament."

In a statement to *Charisma*, Wallnau, author of *The 7 Mountain Mandate: Impacting Culture, Discipling Nations*, said the seven mountains message is not about imposing laws but liberating spheres of influence. Although "the government in its sphere

must enforce sanctions," he said the proposed anti-homosexuality bill "seems like a severe sanction."

He said Christians who crusade for social reform should consider the outcome of the Prohibition Act, which outlawed alcohol but also fueled organized crime.

"Christians had made a massive impact in the 'temperance movement' to stop drunkenness. Then they overreached with draconian legislation called the Volstead Act, and the backlash legalized alcohol," Wallnau said. "To my brothers in Uganda I would say, 'Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.'"

Theologian C. Peter Wagner, who leads the International Coalition of Apostles, which includes Wallnau among its members, affirms the seven mountains teaching but said the anti-homosexuality bill is likely "misguided."

"What we're talking about is basically the prayer of Jesus, where He said, 'Your kingdom come, Your will be done,' fleshed out in the societies in which we live," said Wagner, author of *Dominion: How Kingdom Action Can Change the World*. "That's the goal. We would like the nation of Uganda to reflect the kingdom of God."

Although he commended Ugandan lawmakers for attempting to stand for biblical principles, he said legislating morality is not feasible. If Uganda wanted to legislate biblical principles, it would have to criminalize adultery and premarital sex and not single out homosexuality, he said.

"My position is that this is not a good way to do it," Wagner said. "To legislate against sexual orientation is probably crossing the line. It's like making a law whether parents can spank their children or not. It's much too much of a personal ethical issue. ... I would support raising up a national conscience against homosexuality and allowing the Holy Spirit to work that way."

Saddleback pastor Rick Warren also denounced the bill in a statement released Thursday. He encouraged Ugandan pastors to speak out against the proposed measure, calling it “unjust, extreme and un-Christian toward homosexuals.” (See video below.)

He said the bill would force pastors to report their pastoral conversations with homosexuals to authorities, and would have a “chilling effect” on Ugandan compassion ministry.

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