

Christians, Muslims Unite to Ban Gay Activity in Liberia

A few hundred Liberians representing the Christian and Muslim faiths and civil society organizations gathered in Monrovia, Liberia, Saturday to launch a campaign to press the government to ban **same-sex marriage**.

The campaign is seeking 1 million signatures supporting a resolution to ban gay and lesbian activities there.

More than 25,000 signatures have already been gathered, the head of the citizens' movement spearheading the campaign, Jim Tornonlah, told The Associated Press.

The Liberian senate recently passed a bill strengthening the law against homosexuality. It must be approved by the House of Representatives before it is sent to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to sign into law.

Earlier this year Johnson-Sirleaf expressed her opposition to same-sex marriage, saying that if a law supporting it was brought before her she would not sign it.

However, after the United States State Department took exception to her stance on **gay rights**, she softened her position and said that her government would "guarantee people's civil liberties."

At Saturday's anti-gay marriage rally, an outspoken clergy, representing the Liberia Council of Churches, Rudolph Marsh, lashed out at the influence of foreign powers.

"There are good things in America that we can copy," he said, "we don't have to copy the bad ones; let's leave the bad ones with Americans."

Marsh called on Liberian Christians and Muslims to remain

united “and stand together and tell the world that Liberia is a place of civilized people and will not allow same-sex marriage.”

Muslim leader Sheikh Omaru Kamara, representing his faith at the ceremony, hailed the unity of purpose that both Christians and Muslims were showing against homosexuality.

Liberia’s only known gay and lesbian rights campaigner, Archie Ponpon, insisted Saturday that Liberians should be allowed to practice what they want.

Ponpon was mobbed at least twice after he announced the formation of his group, the Movement for the Defense of Gays and Lesbians in Liberia (MODEGAL) in April.

“It is also their right to do what they are doing today,” Ponpon told the Associated Press of the campaign to ban same-sex marriage in Liberia. But he said the campaigners are wrong to make “verbal attacks on me and trying to kill my advocacy.”

Ponpon, whose mother’s residence was set alight and razed to the ground earlier this year when he announced the formation of his gay-rights body, said he’s still coming under attack for his beliefs.

Ponpon said over the phone that he “is trying to liberalize the minds of people about the rights of others to do what they want to do.”

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