

Ministry Decries Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill

✖ A prominent ex-gay ministry is speaking out against a proposed law in Uganda that could penalize anyone involved in same-sex sexual relationships and anyone knowledgeable of those affairs.

Exodus International leaders said the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009, introduced into the Ugandan Parliament on Oct. 14 to affirm traditional family values, discriminates against people with same-sex attraction.

(Photo: Randy Thomas)

“Overall the bill’s intent is to silence, intimidate and oppress people who have same sex attraction,” said Randy Thomas, executive vice president of Exodus International, a ministry geared toward helping homosexuals find freedom from same-sex attraction. “It is very hostile toward people with same-sex attraction.”

The bill would penalize anyone caught in a homosexual relationship with a maximum penalty of life in prison or in some cases the death penalty. The bill also penalizes anyone who is aware of someone involved in homosexual behavior and does not report the person to authorities within 24 hours.

According to the current wording of the bill pastors, doctors or family members could be fined or imprisoned for up to three years for not reporting anyone known to engage in homosexual conduct.

Exodus asserts that the bill would further alienate people with same-sex attraction from seeking healing and discourage those who may want to help them find freedom.

The Clinical Advisory Board of the American Association of Christian Counselors and Moody Bible Institute adjunct instructor Christopher Yuan joined Exodus in sending a letter to Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni decrying the proposed law.

"While we do not believe that homosexual behavior is what God intended for individuals, we believe that deprivation of life and liberty is not an appropriate or helpful response to this issue," the letter stated.

"Furthermore, the Christian church must be a safe, compassionate place for gay-identified people as well as those who are confused about and conflicted by their sexuality," it continued. "If homosexual behavior and knowledge of such behavior is criminalized and prosecuted, as proposed in this bill, church and ministry leaders will be unable to assist hurting men, women and youth who might otherwise seek help in addressing this personal issue."

The prominent Anglican Church of Uganda has not commented on the bill. As a result, Christians in the United Kingdom are supporting a petition sponsored by a gay-affirming organization calling for the head of the Anglican Church—the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams—to speak out against the measure.

"This is a rare chance for Christians of many views to stand united, whatever their beliefs about sexual ethics," said Symon Hill, associate director of Ekklesia, a religious think tank that is marshalling support for the petition. "Given the importance of Anglicanism in Uganda, it would be right and proper for the Archbishop of Canterbury to make a statement."

Almost 800 people have signed the petition.

Thomas of Exodus, which is not involved in the U.K. petition, said the church rather than the government should take the lead in protecting family values.

“I think that the government needs to step back and not oppress adults who are struggling with same-sex attraction and allow the church to step forward and say, ‘We have a redemptive approach to this issue,’” Thomas told *Charisma*. “We don’t condemn it; we don’t condone it, but we have a redemptive approach.”