

# 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.”

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## Thousands Flock to IHOP Student Awakening

Normal

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Thousands of Christians from across the U.S. have been flocking to Kansas City, Mo., where a Bible college class at the International House of Prayer (IHOP) has sparked nightly revival services.

More than 1,600 people have been packing into IHOP’s ministry school auditorium to pray, worship and experience what many are describing as spiritual renewal.

At services held last weekend, participants shared testimonies of healing from chronic back pain and migraines, deliverance from shame and self-hatred, and experiencing God’s love for the first time. Similar testimonies have been sent from around the world, where the services are being viewed via live Web stream.

Wesley Hall, provost of IHOP’s Bible school, said several people have been saved and 80 people baptized since Nov. 11, when students in his 9 a.m. class started breaking into small

groups and praying for one another.

“Some were lying on the floor, others were weeping, and some were laughing,” said Hall, who led the class with Allen Hood, president of the ministry school. “So I asked the Lord for a release of Pentecost, and it just snowballed. Other teachers brought their classes in, and the Holy Spirit moved for 15 hours, with reports of physical healings and deliverance.”

Almost 2,000 people from the Kansas City area heard about the “awakening” and came to the campus to participate. Since then the meetings, held nightly from 6 p.m. until midnight, have been drawing capacity crowds to the ministry school’s sanctuary.

College students are also gathering across the country to watch the services online. Testimonies have poured in from such schools as Georgia Tech, Wheaton College, Asbury College and the University of California-Berkeley, where students reportedly are experiencing great joy, deep peace, and emotional and physical healing.

“We will continue these nightly meetings as the Holy Spirit leads us,” IHOP founder Mike Bickle co-wrote in a letter with prayer leader Lou Engle, founder of TheCall, which has offices in Kansas City. “We earnestly pray that this awakening will continue, as our nation is in desperate need of another great awakening in this hour.”

Hall said the younger generation is very broken and looking for authenticity. “It’s the students who used to make fun of the manifestations who are now being hit with the power of God,” he said. “Those students don’t want to fake anything or create a culture. Rather, they want to experience God.”

And while Hall said he is grateful for the renewal, he and Hood are praying for more. He said most of the people being touched by the meetings are Christians.

“We want to see the lost saved and the culture changed,” Hall said. “We want this to grow and expand. We want an anointing where no known disease would stand against the people of God. We want to see this on the body of Christ worldwide, the third Great Awakening.”

Bickle said IHOP is not the next place of revival, but “one of many places that the Lord is visiting in our nation.”

“We believe that many other places are soon to receive a visitation of the Holy Spirit,” he told *Charisma*.

Bickle says the meetings will continue in the run up to IHOP’s One Thing conference Dec. 28-31 in Kansas City. Leaders expect some 20,000 students to attend, and seek to mobilize them to evangelize their cities and campuses in partnership with area houses of prayer.

Bickle and Engle said the conference would also address “a new wave of confusion that is systematically seducing many young adults into deception.”

“Sincere young people whose hearts were once ablaze for Jesus are being lured into compromise on foundational biblical truths and practices, while at the same time they are increasing in works of compassion and justice,” the ministers said.

They believe the renewal meetings are a sign that the Holy Spirit will release His power at the conference.

“We must confront the confusion that is pouring forth from many pulpits as well as from the halls of Washington,” they wrote. “It is time to draw a line in the sand. We must hear what the Spirit is saying, and we must act on it. The Spirit will confirm the truth with demonstrations of power.”

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# Islamic Extremists Execute Young Convert in Somalia

Islamic extremists controlling part of the Somali capital of Mogadishu this month executed a young Christian they accused of trying to convert a 15-year-old Muslim to Christianity.

Members of the Islamic extremist group al Shabaab had taken 23-year-old Mumin Abdikarim Yusuf into custody on Oct. 28 after the 15-year-old boy reported him to the militants, an area source told Compass Direct News. Yusuf's body was found on Nov. 14 on an empty residential street in Mogadishu, with sources saying the convert from Islam was shot to death, probably some hours before dawn.

"Our brother Yusuf has been murdered," the source told Compass. "His body was dumped in Yaqshid district of Mogadishu, and his body is said to be on an empty residential street."

Al Shabaab, said to have links with al Qaeda terrorists, controls parts of Mogadishu and much of southern parts of Somalia, as well as other areas of the nation.

Their accusations against Yusuf had led the extremist group to raid Yusuf's home in Holwadag district, Mogadishu, sources said. After searching his home, militia didn't find anything relating to Christianity but still took him into custody.

Before Yusuf was executed by two shots to the head, reports filtered in to the Compass source that he had been badly

beaten and his fingers broken as the Islamists tried to extract incriminating evidence against him and information about other Christians. The source later learned that Yusuf's body showed signs of torture; all of his front teeth were gone, and some of his fingers were broken, he said.

"We don't know the time he was murdered, but his freshly killed body was dumped in Yaqshid district at around 4:30 in the morning of Nov. 14, and due to the will of the family we have buried the body at around 3 p.m. on Nov. 14," the source said.

The clandestine Christians could not safely identify themselves to Yusuf's Muslim family, but they were able to indirectly assist the parents in burying him with dignity, the source said.

It is not known whether under torture Yusuf revealed information about area members of the hidden church, but underground church leaders have been relocating local Christians who knew him, the source said.

"We still don't know if the Shabaab did find any new evidence from Yusuf," he said.

Yusuf's Muslim parents did not know that their son was a Christian, and they had insisted to the al Shabaab militants that he was still a Muslim, the source said. The extremists accused the family of not reporting that their son had converted to Christianity, and they ordered his mother and father to appear before an al Shabaab court.

Although the Compass source could not confirm whether the parents heeded the command, he said they most likely did as it is not uncommon for the militants to behead those who defy their orders.

"I cannot confirm if they appeared before the Islamist court, but that is highly possible," he said. "Who can dare defy

them?"

The extremists have demonstrated they have no qualms about killing those they perceive to be sympathetic to any "foreign" religion, the source said. He added that the Islamic extremists did not execute Yusuf quickly only because they had no evidence against him except the testimony of the teenage boy.

"In Islam, to execute someone you need to have evidence of three witnesses, and they didn't have it," he said. "Al Shabaab is known to do whatever they like, and they don't even follow the rules of their religion they claim adherence to."


The discovery of Yusuf's body brought an end to a strenuous attempt by his family to secure his release, but they are now living in fear since al Shabaab has accused them of concealing their son's new faith.

The source said Yusuf's death was typical of the Islamic extremist group, which often pumps bullets into their victims before dumping their bodies in public places to serve as a warning to those who dare to resist its orders.

Since the ouster of dictator Siad Barre in 1991, Somalia has been without a strong central government and has been at the mercy of vicious clan-based militants. Some, such as al Shabaab, are seeking to establish a strict version of sharia (Islamic law) as they fight to oust the Transitional Federal Government of President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed that is backed by the Africa Union and Western nations.

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# David Crowder Ponders Life, Pain and Hope

*David Crowder and Mike Hogan of the David Crowder Band  offer a simple yet difficult truth that life at its fullest includes pain and sorrow. When we encounter hardships, we want comfort, and we want answers. Crowder and Hogan help us find those answers and give us hope in their book Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven, but Nobody Wants to Die. The Buzz offers an excerpt from their book.*

There are some deaths which, upon occurrence, arrest the considerations of the public at large. There is something—be it the public visibility of the individual or the curiously unusual or wholly universal circumstances surrounding the death—that coerces our attention and empathy.

For me, the first recognition of this phenomenon was while sitting at the bar with my wife at the Red Lobster in Waco, Texas. We were waiting on a table. It was September 1, 1997. The televisions scattered around us announced that an English princess had died. Our collective grief ignited; a planet wept. I cried right along. Sitting there with cheese sticks and a Dr Pepper, I cried for a princess I didn't even know.

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## A Look Behind 'The Blind Side'

Alcon Entertainment | Starring Sandra Bullock, Tim McGraw, Kathy Bates, Quinton Aaron | Rated PG-13

*The Blind Side*, starring Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw, is undeniably inspirational. But Sean and Leigh Anne Tuohy, the Christian couple at the center of the film, hope the story of how they adopted a homeless black teenager who eventually became a first-round NFL draft pick does more than make people cry.

“We hope people walk out of the theater and want to do something for someone else,” said the couple’s daughter, Collins Tuohy.

Based on the true story of Baltimore Ravens rookie Michael Oher, *The Blind Side*—which opened Friday and is rated PG-13 for language, violence and depictions of drug use—chronicles how a handful of Christians helped change the life of a teen growing up in inner-city Memphis, Tenn.

First, administrators at a tiny Christian school on the opposite side of town admitted him as a student, despite a GPA that began with a zero, because it was “the right thing to do,” as the school’s football coach argued in the film. Then the Tuohys (played by Bullock and McGraw) took him into their home after seeing him walking down a road one night in the dead of winter wearing just shorts and a T-shirt.

The Tuohys eventually adopted Oher (played by newcomer Quinton Aaron) into their family, hired a tutor to help him improve his grades and encouraged him to play football. That led to a host of scholarship offers that landed him at the Tuohys’ alma mater, The University of Mississippi, then the 2009 NFL draft.

For some viewers, the idea of a wealthy white family rescuing a disadvantaged black youth may seem paternalistic. Many of the African-Americans depicted in the film are poor, drug-addicted or involved in gangs, and seem in need of assistance.

But 22-year-old Collins, played in the film by Lily Collins, said her family wasn’t trying to make any social statements. They just happened to be there when Oher needed someone and

would have helped him if he was purple, she said.

“What we did for Michael was to give him tools to succeed and to have his back when he needed it and to love him,” Collins said. “It’s amazing what happens when you give a child a little bit of love.”

“The fact that he is where he is now is not a testament to us, it’s a testament to him,” she added. “Because I, Collins Tuohy, would not have done what Michael did to get to where he is. There is no way I would have sat in my kitchen for seven hours and studied every night. There is no way that I could have done what should have been done in four years [of high school] in two years. There’s no way I could have done that.”

Although the Tuohys see adopting Oher as part of God’s plan for their family, Collins says her mom was likely acting on impulse when she brought Oher into their home.

“When you see a child in snow with shorts and a T-shirt walking down the road, it’s usually your immediate reaction to question, and then she just happened to react,” Collins said. “And that’s kind of the message of the movie. If more people would just react, this world might be a little bit better of a place. ... You don’t have to adopt a child. Just help someone. Then we might be a little bit better off.”

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## Prophet of Purpose

📖 By Jeffrey L. Sheler | Doubleday | hardcover | 320 pages | \$22.99

Rick Warren is one of the best-known figures in the modern church. He is the author of the hugely successful book *The Purpose-Driven Life*, but perhaps is better known on the world

stage as one of two pastors selected to pray at President Obama's inauguration in January.

But as journalist Jeffery L. Sheler reveals in his new book, *Prophet of Purpose: The Life of Rick Warren*, Warren traveled a long road to reach the edge of influence.

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## **It's Your Time**

✘ By Joel Osteen | Free Press | hardcover | 320 pages | \$25

In *It's Your Time*, Joel Osteen's follow-up to his 2007 *Become a Better You*, the best-selling author delivers a message of encouragement for readers struggling in an uncertain economic climate. Osteen, pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, said his new book has been influenced by people he has encountered at church and around the country.

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(Photo: Randy Thomas)

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## Happy Spouse ... Happy House

✘ By Pat and Ruth Williams with Dave Wimbish | Standard Publishing | softcover | 224 pages | \$14.99

Author and sports executive Pat Williams, and his wife, Ruth, offer marital advice in *Happy Spouse ... Happy House: The BEST Game Plan for a Winning Marriage*. "BEST" is an acronym for the plan's four key verbs: Bless, Edify, Share and Touch.

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## CrossTalk

✘ By Michael R. Emlet | New Growth Press | softcover | 212 pages | \$15.99

*After working as a family physician for 12 years, Dr. Michael Emlet sensed God calling him into full-time ministry. His desire to offer spiritual counseling and pastoral care to people compelled him to pursue a Master of Divinity degree, and he is now a counselor and faculty member of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation.*

*Emlet understands Christians encounter real problems and that there isn't always a specific verse for every modern-day hardship. His first book, CrossTalk: Where Life and Scripture*

*Meet, offers Christians a guide for applying Scripture to everyday life.*

*He recently answered questions and shared more about his new book.*