

## South African LGBT organisations condemn the arrests of Ugandan LGBT activists

Three Ugandan LGBT activists have been arrested following a peaceful protest at the HIV/AIDS Implementer's Meeting currently underway in Kampala, Uganda.

These activists were peacefully protesting at the meeting to draw attention to the plight of lesbian, gay and transgender people in Uganda in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Ugandan government criminalises homosexuality and refuses to support HIV/AIDS programmes for lesbian, gay and transgender men and women in that country.

All citizens should have the right to access appropriate and relevant HIV/AIDS services. Instead, the State of Uganda continues to silence LGBT people through ongoing intimidation and random arrests. This action by the Ugandan government serves to fuel homophobia, and places lesbian, gay and transgender people at greater risk of further victimisation and ongoing ostracisation.

The HIV Implementer's Meeting aims to up-scale HIV/AIDS programmes through partnerships. This cannot be realised if people's legitimate right to publicly protest, as a means to articulate concerns about discrimination and marginalisation, is denied. Silencing the activists through arrest is an act of state-sanctioned discrimination and intimidation.

The Implementer's Meeting is co-sponsored by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), UNAIDS, the World Bank, the Global Fund, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+).

We urge these co-sponsors to publicly denounce the Ugandan regime for its actions; to condemn the arrests in the strongest possible terms; and to call for the immediate release of those arrested. Silence on the part of the Conference sponsors and organisers will amount to signalling support for this outrageous travesty of freedom of speech and justice.

We demand that the Ugandan State cease its onslaught on the human rights and dignity of lesbian, gay and transgender people.

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