

Translation of the Open Letter to the Federal Government of Germany, dated July 20th, 2023

Dear Chancellor,

dear Ms Baerbock, dear Ms Faser, dear Ms Schulze, dear Ms Amtsberg, dear Mr Lehmann,

"Anti-Homosexuality Act" is the name of the Ugandan law that threatens and restricts the lives, freedom and human rights of LGBTI* people in Uganda in an unbearable manner. This law entered into force by President Yoweri Museveni's signature in May of this year.

The law provides for life imprisonment for same-sex acts and even the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality". By this the inventors and authors of the law probably mean, among other things, repeated actions or homosexual acts committed by a person who has already been convicted of homosexuality.

The "promotion of homosexuality" is punishable by up to 20 years of imprisonment and fines. As a result, organizations that support LGBTI* individuals, can only work under the greatest danger or no longer. And more: The law obliges relatives, neighbors, doctors, and authorities to denounce individuals if becoming aware of their lifestyle or sexual identity as LGBTI*. Thus, all people can be denounced and blackmailed arbitrarily because of actual or assumed homosexuality.

As a result, LGBTI* lose their housing or access to medical care and are prevented from accepting help from supportive organizations. They are persecuted, experience brutal violence and fear for their lives; in prison, they face the worst possible detention standards.

The anti-homosexuality law violates human rights, fueling societal discrimination and violence against queer people. It also risks erasing improvements Uganda had made in combating HIV/AIDS. We are receiving hair-raising reports from activists in the country about the current situation of LGBTI* on the ground. Many of our colleagues are moving out of the country and seek refuge in neighboring countries or in Europe.

We call on the Federal Government and the Bundestag, the embassies, the local NGO human rights organizations, the organizations of the development cooperation and the implementing agencies to provide fast and unbureaucratic support for LGBTI* people in Uganda. Resident LGBTI* organizations must receive emergency financial assistance to be able to implement urgent emergency measures to protect the resident LGBTI* community.

The German government must also support LGBTI* human rights defenders in Uganda who are particularly at risk due to their work in non-governmental organizations and offer protection in Germany by means of humanitarian visas.

In addition, the German government must ensure that Ugandan parliamentarians and representatives of the churches and evangelical organizations who drafted this law and introduced it to parliament, can no longer enter the Schengen area.

The actions of these people, which make a mockery of all human rights must not remain without

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consequences. Furthermore, the federal government must ensure that such anti-human activities are no longer supported with funds from Germany. The entire development cooperation with Uganda must be put to the test:

Anti-LGBTI* forces must not be strengthened, funds must be reallocated and explicitly forwarded to LGBTI*-friendly organizations.

The German government, the churches, and the entire German civil society must cease any cooperation with the "Inter-Religious Council of Uganda" and its member organizations (e.g., the Anglican Church), which have advocated for the Anti-Homosexuality Act, immediately.

The German Foreign Office must revise its travel warning for Uganda and clearly state what the new law means in practice and that it may also affect people who are not part of the LGBTI* community, but engage in queer rights.

In a joint statement, Germany, together with 31 other member states of the Equal Rights Coalition, which Germany currently co-chairs together with Mexico, strongly condemned the law and its social consequences.

In 2021, the German government already committed itself in the "LGBTI Inclusion Concept of the Federal Government for Foreign Policy and Development Cooperation" for advocating for LGBTI* rights worldwide and only recently presented guideline papers on feminist foreign and development policy. It would prove evidence of incapacity of Germany's foreign policy and development cooperation if they do not take action now against Uganda's anti-LGBTI* law. They must not exhaust themselves in noble words; the most serious human rights violations demand rigorous consequences and punishments.

Akademie Waldschlösschen

Bundesstiftung Magnus Hirschfeld

Buntes Leben Stiften

Dreilinden gGmbH

Filia Frauenstiftung

Hannchen-Mehrzweck-Stiftung

Hirschfeld-Eddy-Stiftung

Homosexuelle Selbsthilfe e.V.

Münchner Regenbogen-Stiftung

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presse@regenbogenstiftungen.org