

PRESS RELEASE - THE OBSERVATORY

UGANDA: Police raids Uganda Pride event, arrests several human rights defenders and assaults participants

Paris-Geneva, August 9, 2016 – The Ugandan police must stop the harassment against the LGBTI community and LGBTI rights defenders, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (an FIDH-OMCT partnership) demanded today following a police raid in a Gay Pride Event in a nightclub. During the raid several participants were humiliated and assaulted while being retained and at least 16 human rights defenders, were arrested and questioned for three hours and subsequently released without charges.

On August 4, 2016, at 11:30 pm, the police raided at an event organised at the occasion of Ugandan LGBTI Pride celebrations in Kampala's Venom nightclub. Ms. **Clare Byarugaba**, Equality & Non-Discrimination Coordinator at Chapter Four Uganda, and two leaders of the Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), Messrs. **Pepe Julian Onziema** and **Franck Mugisha**, were arrested together with other activists. They were questioned at the police station for three hours. They were all released without charges but they said that during their detention, they were slapped and pushed around by officers.

The other 200 people attending the pride show were locked up in the building for two hours and humiliated. Transgender women were particularly harassed by the police who sexually assaulted several of them by touching their breast and butts to “confirm their identity”.

At 1 am, the police decided to cancel the event, and before leaving the place, took pictures of all the participants threatening to publish them and confiscated journalists' cameras and recordings.

Kayima Emilian, the police spokesman, explained that the police had to intervene as the organisers did not notify the event to the authorities. The police claimed that the event was promoting homosexual relations and that they had received information regarding a gay wedding to be held during the party. However, the police had been duly informed of the event, and the prior Pride events which had been organised in the previous days were conducted without any incidents.

“This brutal raid is a clear violation of the right to peaceful assembly. It appears as an attempt to repress sexual minorities and rights defenders, in a context where LGBTI citizens routinely face violence and discrimination. The police should protect them, not attack them”, said FIDH President Karim Lahidhi.

It has to be reminded that homosexuality is a sensitive issue in Uganda where same-sex relationships are illegal. On August 1, 2014, the Constitutional Court of Uganda invalidated an anti-LGBTI law adopted by the Parliament on December 20, 2013.

“The Government of Uganda should ensure that rights defenders do not face any acts of intimidation. An immediate, thorough, impartial and transparent investigation should be conducted into the August 4 brutal incidents in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before an independent tribunal, and sanction them as provided by the law”, said OMCT Secretary General Gerald Staberock.

The Observatory calls upon the Uganda authorities to put an end to the harassment against LGBT rights activists and protect them, as well as all other human rights defenders in the country.



The Observatory
for the Protection
of Human Rights Defenders

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (the Observatory) was created in 1997 by FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT). The objective of this programme is to intervene to prevent or remedy situations of repression against human rights defenders. FIDH and OMCT are both members of ProtectDefenders.eu, the European Union Human Rights Defenders Mechanism implemented by international civil society.

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