

To: All News Editors

For Immediate Release

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI+) community in Namibia hereby expresses our deep concern at the deadly violence meted out to members of our community in recent months.

Community activists and allies at a meeting in Swakopmund, Erongo region, today expressed their disdain over the recent spike in incidents of violence that shook the country.

While homosexuality itself is not illegal in Namibia, common law criminalises sodomy, which leads to harassment and marginalisation of the LGBTQI+ community.

Namibia's laws are deeply rooted in Roman-Dutch common law, and while many colonial era and apartheid laws have been repealed, harmful laws remain on the books despite not serving any purpose in an independent Namibia.

Since Swapo parliamentarian Jerry Ekandjo's private members' bills sailed through both houses of parliament with no objections, there has clearly been an upsurge in violence against the LGBTQI+ community.

The bills aim to redefine the term "spouse" and amend the Marriage Act of 1961 to block the recognition of same-sex marriage in Namibia.

The undignified killings of LGBTQI+ Namibians are a direct result of the parliament legislating hate and sanctioning hate crimes.

These bills impose a sentence of six years of direct imprisonment or N\$100 000 fine for the "promotion" of same-sex marriage in Section 3 of the marriage amendment bill.

For the past eight months, six queer people have been murdered in the most gruesome way. They are:

Christof Frederick (30) Windhoek

Gerome Helgrain (41) Luderitz

Vernon Gavin (52) Walvis Bay

Queen Uwuseb (35) Windhoek

Gurney Uirab (35) Tsumeb

Stanley Cloete (36) Windhoek

These are the reported cases the public is aware of.

The violence must stop!

“We need leaders to show they care for all Namibians from all communities. Elected leaders must show they care for all of Namibia and not just conservative, ill-informed, and intolerant Namibians. This country belongs to all of us, and social, religious, and politically conservative Namibians must allow all Namibians to enjoy the peace and stability we boast of to the world. Those who fail to provide political leadership to all Namibians without fear or favour should step aside and allow Namibians who have the best interests of all Namibians at heart,” said Desiree Haman, director of Khaibasen Rural Action Foundation, a non-governmental organisation working to assist communities to fight different social and economic issues.

“Our Lord and Saviour demands, as Christians, that we love our neighbours and our fellow human beings as we love ourselves. He also explicitly detests the taking of a life when he commands us, ‘thou shalt not kill’.

“Tulinam urges church leaders to condemn these abhorrent acts of othering, violence, and murders of LGBTQI+ people in the strongest way or words possible, irrespective of their theological convictions or stances. This is your duty as shepherds of all God’s children, including lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. How do you console the families of these children when you do not even address the injustices against our fellow human beings? Your silence is deafening.” said Madelene Isaacks, director of Tulinam, a non-profit organisation working with religious communities on issues of faith and sexuality.

“LGBTQI+ people contribute to the development of this country, pay taxes, want the country to prosper, and are actively participating in every sphere of society. If I’m not supposed to enjoy my full rights, then exempt me from paying tax,” said Jholerina Timbo, programme manager for Free to Be Me.

“Every Namibian deserves to live and work in peace. The political and legal leadership of this country must wake up as peace and stability have become foreign concepts to some Namibians,” said Agapitus Hausiku, director of Out-Right Namibia, who works to broaden understanding of LGBTQI+ issues in Namibia.

“Young people are ready to drive this country forward, but the fear that grips the LGBTQI+ community makes it difficult for the youth to thrive. If a specific section of society feels unwanted and unsafe in our communities, they will inevitably look to countries where their work, ideas, and taxes are appreciated. The rate at which young queer Namibians leave the country with their skills, resources, and energy is alarming,” said Zindri Swartz, production manager of Drag Night Namibia, an organisation that works in the entertainment and social spheres.

The community herewith calls on the political leadership of this country to condemn the recent spate of killings and work towards a truly tolerant and compassionate society.

It is not enough anymore to hail the illusion of Namibia as a safe and tranquil country. Unfortunately, the senseless violence against sexual minorities, including people with disabilities, sex workers, women, and children, in this country has been evidence to the contrary.

The community hereby demands:

That politicians stop their hate campaign against sexual minorities;

That national leaders condemn the wave of violence against sexual minorities;

That political parties show courage and support the right to exist of all Namibians;

That politicians, political parties, and elected officials rededicate themselves to a Namibia where everyone lives and works towards their own well-being and the prosperity of all Namibians.

That the public educate themselves about the rights of fellow citizens, especially minorities;

That businesses show solidarity and work with Namibians from all communities as everyone's money

That Namibians heed the call of 'One Namibia, One Nation' that the founders of this country aspired to and fought for.

The undersigned organisations:

Out-Right Namibia

Khaibasen Rural Action Foundation

Tulinam

Drag Night Namibia

Voice of Hope Foundation

Rural Voices Amplified for Change

Pride Pop-Up Namibia

MPower Community Trust

Free to Be Me

Omaheke Hope For All

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