

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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Uganda charges 20 LGBT+ people with risking spread of coronavirus

By Alice McCool

Thomson Reuters Foundation (31.03.2020) – <https://reut.rs/2wmou0i> – Ugandan police charged 20 LGBT+ people with disobeying rules on social distancing and risking the spread of coronavirus on Tuesday, drawing criticism from campaigners who said they were using the restrictions to target sexual minorities.

Gay sex carries a possible life sentence in Uganda, one of the most difficult countries in Africa to be a sexual minority.

The 14 gay men, two bisexual men and four transgender women were taken into custody on Sunday when police raided a shelter on the outskirts of the capital Kampala.

Police said they were disobeying coronavirus-related restrictions on social distancing by “congesting in a school-like-dormitory setting within a small house” despite a ban on gatherings of more than 10, which has now been reduced to five.

Deputy Police Spokesperson Patrick Onyango denied allegations made by LGBT+ campaigners that they were targeted because of their sexual orientation.

“We still have offences of unnatural sex in our law books,” Onyango told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “We would charge them with that law, but we are charging them with those counts as you can see.”

Onyango said there were two charges against the group – disobedience of lawful order and committing neglectful acts likely to spread infection of disease. The charges carry a maximum of two and seven years imprisonment respectively.

Although 23 people were arrested initially, three people were released without charges on medical grounds. The group are now

on remand and will appear in court on 29 April 29, he added.

LGBT+ campaigners in Uganda say members of the community risk physical attacks in their daily life and routinely encounter harassment, as well as facing prejudice over work, housing and health care.

“They are always using alternative charges to arrest people for unnatural offences so it (coronavirus) just worked perfectly for them,” said Patricia Kimera, a lawyer with Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, defending the group.

“But definitely the reason they have been arrested is their sexual orientation.”

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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1269