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South Africa: Archbishop condemns anti-LGBTI violence

HRW (21.10.2013) - Southern Africa's Anglican archbishop calls for an end to violence and discrimination on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, in a [video](#) Human Rights Watch released today.

The remarks by the Most Revd Dr. Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town and Metropolitan of Southern Africa, challenge arguments put forward by several African governments that culture, tradition, and religion justify the marginalization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people.

"Don't fear," Archbishop Makgoba says in his message. "You've been given this task of helping the rest of humanity to realize that we are called to respect and we are called to honor each other. People may come and say this is un-African, and I'm saying love cuts across culture."

Human Rights Watch interviewed the archbishop for the video as part of an effort to highlight supportive voices for the LGBTI movement in Africa.

Makgoba's statement reinforces the persistent efforts of his predecessor, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu, to combat homophobia and transphobia in Africa and around the world, Human Rights Watch said. Tutu has spoken out against a number of laws and practices that violate the rights of LGBTI people, including [Uganda's](#) proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill and [Burundi's](#) criminalization of same-sex conduct in 2009.

"When you violate somebody on the basis of difference you're not only violating them but you are demeaning yourself," Makgoba says in the video. He exhorts leaders to take up their "moral responsibility to stop the violence against people who are different."

Makgoba's statement was released amid high levels of violence against LGBTI people in Africa. In Cameroon, Eric Ohena Lembembe, a gay activist, was [murdered](#) in July 2013, but government officials have [refused](#) to acknowledge that his murder might be a hate crime. In [South Africa](#), lesbian and bisexual women and non-gender-conforming people face endemic rape and assault; the killing of Duduzile Zozo in July is the most recently reported example of such targeted violence.

"Archbishop Makgoba's statement should serve as a call to national, religious, and cultural leaders across Africa who support the rights of LGBTI people to speak out publicly," said [Graeme Reid](#), LGBT Rights director. "And the archbishop's message of respect for everyone's rights should challenge leaders who have opposed the rights of LGBTI people to reconsider their positions."
