

Table of Contents

- ***Standing up for human rights in Brunei***
-

Standing up for human rights in Brunei

The World Post (16.05.2014) - http://www.huffingtonpost.com/francoishenripinault/standing-up-for-human-rig_b_5337727.html - A few days ago, the government of Brunei Darussalam announced it would revise its criminal code, introducing new rules supposedly inspired from Sharia law, which punish homosexuality and adultery with the death penalty.

These rules would be contrary in every respect to international law and greatly offend our moral sensibilities. The new code would be discriminatory in criminalizing private behavior and the sexual orientation of consenting adults. It would undermine the rights of minorities, as well as freedom of expression. It would introduce cruel and degrading punishments, harmful to human dignity, for these alleged "crimes."

If Brunei enforced such laws, the gay community would pay a heavy price for this intolerable repression, of which they are already victims in Brunei, as in many other countries. As we approach the International Day Against Homophobia on May 17th, we should be paying close attention to what is happening around the world.

As the United Nations said, and as past experience shows, the effects of these laws would be further exacerbated by arbitrary methods of application to the detriment of women. In view of the stereotypes that usually govern the action of the police and the judicial system, in all probability women will be the main victims of death by stoning.

As a result of my strong belief that fighting all forms of violence against women is a universal cause that is too often overlooked I established the Kering Foundation in 2009. This is also why I denounced the sentence to death by stoning of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani in Iran; and now history risks repeating itself and in the most tragic way.

If confirmed, the decision of the Sultanate of Brunei is an enormous leap backwards for human rights. What is shocking is the extremism of this stance: the scale and absurdity of this attack on human rights. How can the Brunei government turn its back on human dignity in this way?

Remaining astonished is one thing ... After all, such a violation of human rights would just be another minor setback in humanity's slow march towards moral progress. There will no doubt be others, as there are now, such as the abduction of nearly 300 schoolgirls in Nigeria.

Remaining astonished and inactive is not an option -- our conscience will not allow it. This is why I have asked the more than 31,000 employees of the Kering Group and its brands to boycott hotels and restaurants belonging to the Dorchester Collection chain, owned by the Sultan of Brunei.

I proudly stand with other global voices in speaking out in support of this cause. I hope that others will join us in asking the Sultan of Brunei to rescind his decision.

This action might seem purely symbolic, given the scale of human rights violations perpetrated across the globe, and compared with the discrimination and violence suffered every day by religious minorities, LGBT communities and women.

We recognize that our action will not, by itself, resolve all these difficulties. But that does not make our stance futile. On the contrary, it is fitting and proper that we challenge and take action over a shocking announcement. We hope our gesture, coupled with that of our partners, can create a movement of solidarity and, in the end, contribute to the progress of international human rights. Such symbols are the levers through which we can mobilize public opinion.

Let us, with all our might, pull this lever and ignite change for the better.
