

ANAC Denounces Anti-Gay Legislation

The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) denounces in the strongest terms, the anti-gay legislation recently passed by the Ugandan Parliament. We join with others in the health care and human rights community in utter dismay about this law which denies basic human rights and threatens to erode gains made in the battle against HIV and AIDS.

On March 21, 2023, Uganda's parliament passed sweeping antigay legislation that proposes tough new penalties for same-sex relationships and criminalizes anyone identifying as LGBTQ, making it a crime to even identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, and obligating families and friends to report people in same-sex relationships to authorities. It imposes lengthy jail sentences, including life in prison for gay sex, and the death penalty for "aggravated" homosexuality, which includes sex when the "offender" is a person living with HIV. This legislation is an affront to basic human rights and further institutionalizes stigma and discrimination, and will further push vulnerable communities away from life-saving health services.

While more than 30 African countries, including Uganda, already ban same-sex relationships, the new law passed on Tuesday appears to be the first to outlaw merely identifying as LGBTQ. Laws criminalizing LGBTQ identity and relationships are barriers to epidemic control, as they dissuade key populations from being tested, seeking prevention and treatment services and health care providers from offering it.

The new legislation is also completely in opposition to Ugandan President Museveni's stated support for the HIV response. In 2017, UNAIDS and others lauded the President when he launched the Presidential Fast-track Initiative on ending HIV & AIDS in Uganda by 2030, the first such initiative globally.

We call on funders, global HIV and human rights organizations and other stakeholders to work with Uganda's authorities to ensure the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which has been passed by parliament but is not yet enacted as a law, be stopped. In the interest of promoting public health and equal rights of Ugandan citizens, we call on President Museveni to reject the bill and not sign it into law.

The Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (ANAC) is the leading nursing organization responding to HIV/AIDS and related co-morbidities and co-occurring conditions globally. Founded in 1987, our mission is to promote the education and development of nurses and others involved in the delivery of health care to persons living with or affected by HIV and to promote the health and welfare of people living with HIV/AIDS around the world.