

# HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE

## An Open Letter to President Yoweri Museveni from the HIV JUSTICE WORLDWIDE Coalition

14 April 2023

A successful response to the HIV epidemic in Uganda must protect the health and human rights of everyone in the country. One of the greatest challenges to ending HIV as a public health threat by 2030 is ensuring those most at risk, including LGBTIQ people, are able to access prevention and testing, and those living with HIV can access care, treatment and support services. To achieve this, measures that are respectful of human rights and empowering of communities are effective; criminalisation and imprisonment are not.

Our experience as a global coalition working to end punitive responses to people living with HIV in all their diversities has taught us that criminal laws are not only ineffective, they are also counterproductive to the HIV response. Such laws are not driven by evidence but by perceived “morality” and often lead to a myriad of human rights violations, from arbitrary arrests and detentions to coerced confessions and plea bargains to unfair trials and harsh prison sentences.

Signing the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2023 into law would not only further promote discrimination and hate-crime against LGBTIQ communities, but it could reverse the progress that the Government of Uganda has made towards ending HIV as a public health threat.

If the bill is adopted, it would violate multiple fundamental rights guaranteed under Uganda’s Constitution and international human rights instruments to which Uganda is a party, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The rights at stake include the rights to freedom of expression and association, liberty, privacy, equality, bodily autonomy, freedom from discrimination, freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment, and the right to a fair trial.

**We therefore call upon President Yoweri Museveni not to sign the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2023 into law. As President, we urge him to show how Uganda is committed to protecting all of its citizens and doing no harm to people for simply being who they are. The Ugandan police should also note that the bill is not law yet and must not be used to deny LGBTIQ Ugandans the right to access HIV services.**

Furthermore, we call on President Yoweri Museveni and the government of Uganda to enact legislation to protect the rights of LGBTIQ people, already a vulnerable and marginalised group in Uganda, from all forms of hate, violence, and inhumane treatment and ensure the protection of their fundamental rights irrespective of their sexual orientation.

We express our unreserved solidarity with LGBTIQ communities in Uganda and the human rights-focused civil society organisations that support them, as we work together towards a world where every person is treated with dignity, respect, and equality, free from all forms of discrimination.



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