

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Jamaica: Amnesty International condemns homophobic violence

Amnesty International strongly condemns recent episodes of violence against persons who are perceived to be gay in Jamaica. The organization is particularly concerned by reports of mob violence against persons perceived as homosexuals who are targeted because of their appearance or behaviour, which seems to be increasing in frequency.

On Sunday 8 April 2007, a crowd allegedly surrounded a church in Mandeville and hurled different objects through a window at the back of the church. The attacks were directed at persons in attendance of the funeral being held there, who the crowd believed to be homosexual. On 2 April 2007, another crowd reportedly threw stones and bottles at a group of costumed men who were dancing in the carnival procession along Gloucester Avenue in Montego Bay. According to reports, the crowd was angered because the men were supposedly gyrating in a sexually suggestive manner and demanded that they leave the stage. According to eye-witnesses, the men were attacked, chased and beaten by the mob of around 30 or 40 people. At least one of them had to be hospitalized due to injuries.

These two incidents occurred only two months after a group of men were targeted in a similar manner in a pharmacy in Tropical Plaza, Half-Way Tree, in Kingston. A human rights defender told Amnesty International that a mob of at least 200 people had gathered outside the store, calling for the men to be beaten to death because they were homosexual.

Amnesty International condemns these attacks and calls on the Jamaican authorities to ensure that a full and impartial investigation of the above-mentioned cases takes place, and that those responsible for the incitement of violence and for public beatings will be brought to justice. In compliance with its international obligations stated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in the American Convention on Human Rights, Jamaican authorities should send a clear message to society that discrimination against sexual minorities will not be tolerated and that violent episodes will be fully prosecuted. Such assaults are both human rights violations and a threat to the rule of law in Jamaica.

Amnesty International urges the Jamaican government to work closely with human rights defenders and with groups representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Jamaica to find solutions to prevent these episodes from occurring again.

