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Public Statement

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Uganda: Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people targeted

Amnesty International today strongly condemned the ongoing targeting and intimidation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Uganda. The organization is particularly concerned by reports of harassment against LGBT people in the past week. These reports come after the publication on 8 August 2006 in the Ugandan newspaper *The Red Pepper* of the names of several men the magazine claimed are gay.

In at least three cases, Amnesty International received reports that people named by *The Red Pepper* subsequently suffered harassment from and were ostracized by colleagues and families.

Amnesty International condemns the publication of this article as it encourages discrimination and puts those named at a high risk of violence. Furthermore, Amnesty International is concerned that those named may be arrested on the basis of their alleged sexual orientation and could face humiliating and degrading treatment in custody.

This new development adds to a pattern of abuse against the rights of LGBT people who have repeatedly been targeted by the Ugandan authorities. Amnesty International is concerned that the Ugandan government's criminalization of homosexuality, as provided for in the Ugandan Penal Code (art. 140, 141, 143), is providing the legal grounds on which these abuses are allowed to happen.

On 20 July 2005, LGBT activist Victor Juliet Mukasa's house was raided in her absence. A friend who was staying at her house was arrested and subjected to humiliating and degrading treatment while in custody. No warrants were produced prior to the search and her friend was released without being charged the next morning.

On 5 July 2005, the Ugandan parliament voted for a constitutional amendment stating that "marriage is lawful only if entered into between a man and a woman" The amendment further declared that it was "unlawful for same-sex couples to marry"

Earlier in February 2005, the Ugandan Media Council banned the play "The Vagina Monologues" by the American playwright Eve Ensler on the basis that it was seen as promoting "acts of unnatural sex ...or homosexuality".

In October 2004, a radio station was compelled to pay a fine for hosting a live talk show with sexual rights activists discussing discrimination against members of the LGBT community in Uganda and their need for HIV/AIDS services. The Broadcasting Council imposed a fine of approximately one thousand US dollars, claiming that the programme was "contrary to public morality" and breached existing laws. Following this incident, security officials continued to harass LGBT people, causing LGBT human rights defenders at one

of the main universities to fear for their personal safety.

Amnesty International called on the Ugandan government to respect the provisions on equality and freedom of discrimination enshrined in its constitution and its commitment to the right of privacy and non-discrimination, as set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) [articles 2 and 26]. The ICCPR provides that States cannot curtail the enjoyment of human rights on the basis of sexual orientation. The UN Human Rights Committee, which monitors states' implementation of the ICCPR, has urged states not only to repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality but also to enshrine the prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation into their constitutions or other fundamental laws.