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Cameroon in denial over increased attacks on human rights defenders and discrimination against LGBTI advocates

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Cameroon

Over the years Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of government and security officials using violence, arrest and detention to stifle the work of human rights defenders. Many of them are targeted because they criticize the government's human rights record. Some have received telephone calls threatening them with violence, including death, from people they believe to be government agents.

In June 2011, it was reported that a government official had been involved in the killing of human rights defender, Gueimé Djimé, a member of *OS-Civil Droits de l'Homme*, a human rights group based in Kousséri, Extreme North province. He was allegedly targeted due to his opposition to the appointment of two local chiefs. The government arrested four men in connection with his murder; however, to date none of them have been brought to trial.

Recently the human rights movement has been shocked and saddened by the brutal murder in July 2013 of Eric Ohena Lembembe, the director of the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS (CAMFAIDS). His friends suspect he was killed because of his outspoken advocacy on behalf of LGBTI people. No one has been arrested for this crime, and the government has failed to publicly condemn his killing.

Amnesty International welcomes recommendations made to Cameroon to ensure the immediate protection of human rights defenders, to investigate all threats and attacks against them and to bring those responsible to justice.¹

Grave violations of the human rights of individuals because of their real or perceived sexual orientation have become commonplace in Cameroon. Pervasive prejudice against LGBTI individuals has created an environment in which both members of the security forces and members of the community believe they can abuse such individuals with impunity.

Astoundingly, and in violation of rights enshrined in Cameroon's constitution and its international obligations, Article 347 bis of the Penal Code continues to criminalize same-sex sexual acts and is used to justify abuse and discrimination against real or perceived LGBTI individuals, whether by state actors or members of the community.

The victims are often too scared to seek protection from the police, who often themselves subject individuals suspected of being LGBTI to arbitrary arrest and/or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including beatings and anal examinations by medical personnel on the orders of the judiciary. Lawyers representing LGBTI individuals have received death threats, including threats to kill their children.

Amnesty International welcomes that many states raised concerns about attacks and threats against LGBTI individuals and the discrimination they suffer in Cameroon, and calls on Cameroon to urgently

¹ A/HRC/24/15, recommendations 113.110-116 (Belgium, Spain, UK, Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Tunisia).

act on these recommendations and to take legislative and administrative measures to prohibit and eliminate discriminatory treatment on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity; to repeal Article 347 bis; and to promptly investigate reports of human rights violations based on sexual orientation or gender identity and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Cameroon on 20 September 2013 during its 24th session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Cameroon: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR17/002/2012/en/3932e538-15d6-4f87-b034-c8dob2e9213b/afr170022012en.pdf>

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