

Ecuador: Pride and prejudice -- Time to end abuses based on sexual identity

It is a sad irony that, while Ecuador is one of the few countries in the world whose constitution explicitly includes "sexual orientation" in its anti-discrimination provisions, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people in the country continue to suffer human rights violations, Amnesty International said today.

The organization is today releasing a report detailing recent cases of human rights violations against members of the LGBT community, including arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment in custody and harassment of activists and human rights defenders.

"Eight months ago in Quito we launched a comprehensive report on homophobic harassment and violence in Ecuador. Sadly, these abuses continue and the Ecuadorian authorities have taken no action to put an end to them," Amnesty International said.

Most of the cases described in the report took place in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil. In recent months, Guayaquil has seen a sharp increase in police round-ups, often ending with arbitrary arrests of LGBT people. In a worrying development, the new Chief of Police for the Guayas and Galápagos Province, who was appointed in September 2001, has recently declared his homophobic views.

"This is of great concern since no change is possible unless a clear and unequivocal signal comes from the authorities at the highest level that the singling out, torture and ill-treatment of people on the basis of their sexual orientation will not be tolerated, all instances will be properly investigated and those responsible brought to justice," Amnesty International said.

The organization also urged the Ecuadorian authorities to take concrete measures to ensure that law enforcement personnel, prison staff and other relevant officials are trained in how to protect LGBT people against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; to prevent rape and other sexual violence against LGBT people in custody; and to protect and support human rights defenders working on sexual identity issues.

"It is time for Ecuador to live up to the promise of equality made in its constitution and to break the vicious circle of impunity and abuses based on sexual identity," Amnesty International concluded.

***The report **Pride and Prejudice: Time to break the vicious circle of impunity for abuses against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people** is available on the web at:*
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/amr280012002>

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