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Human rights violations against gays/lesbians highlighted by Amnesty International

CAPETOWN – Amnesty International’s International Council Meeting currently in session in South Africa today decided to increase the visibility of its work on human rights violations on the grounds of sexual orientation in the context of its ongoing activities.

Such work includes the organization’s campaign in the run up to the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this campaign, Amnesty International is highlighting the cases of 28 human rights defenders who have suffered human rights violations because of their defence of basic rights. These include two lawyers who received death threats for denouncing the killing of transvestites in Brazil and the case of a lesbian activist in Zimbabwe.

The council meeting – the organization’s highest decision making body -- also decided to support the holding of an international meeting of the organization’s groups and networks focusing on gay and lesbian concerns to strengthen Amnesty International’s organizational response to human rights violations based on sexual orientation.

In 1991, the International Council Meeting decided to work for the release of people imprisoned solely on the grounds of their homosexuality, including the practice of homosexual acts in private between consenting adults. Since then, the organization has issued several reports focusing on human rights violations against homosexuals including torture, “disappearances” and extrajudicial executions. It has included such violations in its regular reporting and action and has called for the repeal of legislation which criminalizes homosexual relations between consenting adults, including a current campaign on such legislation in several states in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Today’s decision reaffirms the organization’s commitment to give greater visibility to human rights violations based on sexual orientation in its research and campaigning documents, and in its major country and relevant issue-based campaigns.
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