

## EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS NETWORK

### Public Statement

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### **KAMPALA: EHAHRD-Net is concerned by increasing attacks on LGBTI activists in Uganda**

EHAHRD-Net is concerned by the increasing harassment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in Uganda primarily at the hands of the Ugandan police. Over the course of the last months five LGBTI people have been arbitrarily arrested and are currently awaiting trial.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008 two transgender individuals, one Burundian refugee in exile in Uganda and the other a Ugandan, were arrested in a bar in Kampala after the bar bouncers had verbally and physically assaulted them. They were taken to a police station, detained for four days and then charged of ‘public nuisance’. They were then taken to court, and released on bail. Of particular concern are the claims made by these two individuals to Amnesty International, key EHAHRD-Net partners, that they were subjected to harassment and mistreatment whilst in detention.

More recently, on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2008, three LGBTI human rights defenders, Valentine Kalende, of Freedom and Roam Uganda, Julian Pepe Onziema, of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) and Mukwaya Usaam, a member of the Ugandan LGBTI community, were arbitrarily arrested at a HIV/AIDS Implementers’ Meeting where they were protesting against the current failure of the government to offer HIV/AIDS prevention programs and treatment to LGBTI persons in Uganda. They have been charged with criminal trespass and released on bail pending trial.

Given that ‘carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature’ is illegal in Uganda , many NGOs and activists are reluctant to take-up the issue despite the increasing harassment facing LGBTI people. Offering protection to LGBTI activists, however, is a core component of the work and activities of EHAHRD-Net; it is therefore currently offering financial support as well as legal and personal advice to all five LGBTI persons.

*“Sexual minority activists continue to largely lack the support from the wider human rights movement both in Uganda and in the sub-region as a whole. Nevertheless, sexual minority rights are human rights and in light of the fact that LGBTI activists face particularly harsh challenges it is essential for human rights organizations to begin to take up this issue and fight”* says Hassan Shire Sheikh, Chairperson of EHAHRD-Net.

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