

Human Rights Watch apologises to Peter Tatchell

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"Inappropriate, disparaging, inaccurate, condemnatory and intemperate personal attacks," acknowledges HRW

"Apology accepted, let's move on and work together," urges Peter Tatchell

London - 30 June 2010

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has made a full and unreserved apology to human rights rights campaigner Peter Tatchell.

The apology has been made by HRW's Executive Director, Kenneth Roth, in New York.

It says sorry for a series of untrue and personal attacks on Mr Tatchell, made by the head of HRW's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) programme, Scott Long.

The full text of the apology follows below, including statements by Kenneth Roth, Scott Long and Peter Tatchell.

The apology by Human Rights Watch acknowledges that Mr Long made a series of "inappropriate...disparaging...inaccurate...condemnatory...intemperate personal attacks" on Peter Tatchell.

"I thank Kenneth Roth and HRW for their gracious and fulsome apology. Their readiness to acknowledge the wrong done and say sorry is commendable. My appreciation also to Scott Long for conceding his false allegations and apologising. It can't have been easy for him. He has shown dignity and humility. I appreciate that," said Mr Tatchell.

"I accept the apologies. It is time to forgive and move on. For me, this closes the matter. The attacks on me are in the past. I look forward to working with HRW and Scott Long in the future."Despite this unfortunate episode, my admiration for HRW's inspiring, effective work is undiminished. It is documenting tyranny and oppression all across the world; exposing human rights abusers and defending the victims. I urge people to support its humanitarian endeavours," said Mr Tatchell.

Referring to the nature of the attacks on him by Scott Long, Peter Tatchell added:

"I defend the right of people to criticise me. But Mr Long's attacks went beyond criticism. He made false allegations, which misrepresented my human rights campaigns. It is these untrue claims that are the focus of my objections."Mr Long's falsehoods and personal attacks were many and varied. They included a highly libellous and defamatory essay written by him, which appeared in the March 2009 issue of the journal Contemporary Politics, published by Routledge, which is part of the Taylor and Francis publishing group:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a909308032~db=all~jumptype=rss>

"This essay made inaccurate allegations. It grossly misrepresented and denigrated my campaigns in defence of gay people persecuted by Iran and in opposition to Islamist fundamentalism." "I acted in good faith when I opposed the execution of Iranians accused of homosexuality and when I campaigned against fundamentalist Islam in Britain and worldwide.

"Contrary to Mr Long's claims, I never accused the 13 year-old victim of an alleged rape in Iran of 'wanting the rape.' Nor am I guilty of 'belittling violent sexual assault, and blaming the victim.' These are outright fabrications.

In addition, Mr Long accused me of me 'going after' British Muslims and adopting a 'bullying tone' towards the Muslim community in Britain. This is also untrue. I have always made a clear distinction between Muslim people in general and the Islamist extremists who oppose human rights, including the human rights of fellow Muslims. Indeed, I have often defended Muslim communities, in Britain and worldwide, against prejudice and persecution. I will continue to do so.

"Sectarian smears against human rights defenders are wrong and counter-productive. We should support each other in our shared commitment to universal human rights," concluded Mr Tatchell.

This is the full text of the Human Rights Watch statement and apology:

Human Rights Watch (HRW) apologizes to Peter Tatchell for a number of inappropriate and disparaging comments made about him in recent years by Scott Long, director of HRW's LGBT program. We recognise that personal attacks have no place in the human rights movement.

Mr Long said: "Although we have our different viewpoints, I respect Peter Tatchell's contribution to human rights and apologize for any condemnatory and intemperate allegations made in haste and for any inaccurate statements made in my personal capacity."

Mr Tatchell said: "Despite the unfortunate personal attacks on me by Mr Long, I acknowledge his otherwise important contribution to LGBT human rights and I continue to value the vital work of Human Rights Watch worldwide."

Following Mr Long's apology and subsequent discussions, Human Rights Watch is pleased to announce that both Mr Long and Mr Tatchell agree that the movement to protect human rights, including the rights of LGBT persons, is best served when activists focus their criticism on those who abuse rights rather than those who seek to defend those rights.

Mr Long and Mr Tatchell undertake to work to ensure that any airing of disagreements on LGBT and other human rights issues takes place with honesty, civility and respect. They also agree to encourage their friends and colleagues to do likewise.

HRW hopes that this apology and agreement will enable us to move forward together to pursue our common goal: the defence of universal human rights.

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch - New York, 30 June 2010

Further information:

Peter Tatchell

Joel Sanders (Programme Director, HRW head office, New York)

Tom Porteous (London Director, HRW) -

