

Liberia: “Kill the Gays” Bill Spreading

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Former Liberian first lady Jewel Howard Taylor has introduced a bill making homosexuality liable to a death sentence. Jewel is a senator and former president Charles Taylor’s ex-wife. Uganda re-tabled a similar controversial anti-gay bill recently.

Homosexuality is outlawed in 38 African countries and it can be punishable by death in Mauritania, Sudan, and northern Nigeria.

Writing about Liberia’s anti-gay bill, Melanie says:

Expressed many times on my blog, is the fear that David Bahati’s Kill the Gays Bill, currently before the Ugandan Parliament, could well spread to other parts of Africa , as it is accompanied by the promotion of much anti-gay rhetoric and myth. It seems that the Kill the Gays idea is indeed spreading, even though it has met with great criticism around the world. In conversations last year, David Bahati told Warren Throckmorton and me that other African nations had expressed interest in his Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which we have come to know as The Kill the Gays Bill.

A map showing penalties targeting gays and lesbians in Africa. Image source: <http://ilga.org/>

Warren writes:

No date has been set for debate or vote. Both Houses of the legislature would need to pass the bill to send to the President for signature or veto. I wrote about this bill and a companion bill in their House last week.

As far as I can determine, in Liberia penalties for a First Degree Felony can range from 10 years in prison to death. The amendment is short and without definitions.

Evan wonders why the Nobel prize winner and president of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf remains silent:

If convicted, such a crime would warrant punishment ranging from 10 years in jail to death.

And Nobel prize winner Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has remained silent on the issue.

The issue continues to heat up owing to the pressure of the U.S. and the U.K. to consider gay rights as human rights over the past year.

Should the U.S. cut back aid to Liberia?:

The U.S. gives quite a bit of aid to Liberia. The question is whether we will put our money where are

mouths are and actually cut back assistance because of this issue, even as American influence on the continent wanes in the face of massive Chinese investment. Would such a stance fly well with the American electorate? There may be mixed support for gay marriage, but I'm pretty sure that a healthy majority of Americans would recognize death-for-sodomy as a massive human rights violation...

Liberia's former first lady's letter to the Liberian parliamentarians regarding anti-gay bill. Image courtesy of <http://sebaspace.wordpress.com/>.

Sebaspace thinks the former first lady is not genuine:

It would appear that Ms. Jewel Taylor has learned one or two things about how campaigns of this sort have come a-cropper in other parts of Africa. So, she is covering her flank by disguising her anti-gay sentiments in language that suggests that she is trying to prevent "gay marriage." — Really? In a country where the language of the law is against same gender loving, Ms. Taylor's only concern is gay marriage? Why do I find that hard to believe?

Boima J. V. Boima cautions:

But the law, if passed, could have economic implications for Liberia since western powers including the US and UK are tying gay rights to foreign aid to third world countries, including Liberia.

The draft bill surfaced following repeated calls by UN Secretary General Ban ki-moon and western powers urging African leaders to legalize same sex marriage or risk being deprived of foreign assistance for development.

Gay rights activists and sympathizers can sign a petition to protest Liberia's "Kill the Gays" bill:

Target: Liberian Senator Jewel Howard Taylor

Goal: To urge Senator Taylor not to push this bill, which would allow judges to punish homosexual acts with the death penalty in Liberia.

In the west African country of Liberia, LGBT couples have been struggling to gain legal recognition. But Senator Taylor, who recently introduced a bill that would make homosexual acts punishable by death, could serve as a huge roadblock to equality. Senator Taylor must stop advocating for the passage of a bill that would essentially take the lives of some LGBT Liberians.

Many African leaders claim that homosexuality is un-natural and un-African. South African is an exception with a constitution, which provides the most comprehensive protection of gay rights in the world.

P.S.

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