

Public statement of warning concerning Peter Tatchell and Outrage!

Saturday 3 February 2007, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 3 February 2007).

This press statement was signed by 20 African LGBT activists.

IMPORTANT: see on this the apology of Human Rights Watch: [Human Rights Watch apologises to Peter Tatchell](#)

PRESS RELEASE: African LGBTI Human Rights Defenders Warn Public Against Participation in Campaigns Concerning LGBTI Issues in Africa Led by Peter Tatchell and Outrage!

PUBLIC STATEMENT OF WARNING

In order to prevent Peter Tatchell and Outrage! from causing further damage through their unfounded campaigns and press releases, we issue this public statement of warning.

As Human Rights Defenders from across Africa, we strongly discourage the public from taking part in any LGBTI campaigns or calls to action concerning Africa that are led by Peter Tatchell or Outrage!

Collaboration across continents is both important and valuable. We are willing to work with those who respect our advice and expertise regarding our continent.

However, Outrage! has been acting in contempt and disregard of the wishes and lives of African Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) Human Rights Defenders. We have made every attempt to address this matter with Outrage!, personally, and they have refused to listen. We now take this matter to the public, requesting you not to take part in any of Peter Tatchell or Outrage!'s campaigns regarding Africa, as they are not factually-based and are harmful to African activists.

Through the following actions, Outrage! has repeatedly disrespected the lives, damaged the struggle, and endangered the safety of African Human Rights Defenders:

1. Outrage!'s press releases contain information that is not factual. They do not verify information before including it in their press releases. When they are corrected by local activists, they refuse to print retractions or to make any attempt to stop the damaging effects of their press releases.
2. Outrage! repeatedly quotes people out of context and uses these statements to further their own agenda rather than presenting the truth.
3. Outrage! does not consult the relevant local activists before embarking on campaigns that directly affect us and are destructive to our work. They disregard collaborative efforts by African LGBTI Human Rights Defenders and international Human Rights organisations, and come up with unilateral strategies that work against the progress being achieved by the rest of the Human Rights actors. We are tired of having to constantly expend energy working to undo irreparable damage that Outrage! has caused.
4. Outrage! exaggerates the violations our governments commit. When they quote African Human Rights Defenders in the very same press releases where they are exaggerating claims against our governments, we are held responsible for their reckless outbursts. As African activists, we are then left to face the wrath of our communities for statements we never made.
5. Outrage! does not listen to, value, or heed the advice of local genuine activists. They mix our words with the opinions of uninformed, naïve, or crook individuals. They take whatever information is available, regardless of the source, and twist it to gain more publicity. Certainly, Outrage! is not acting on our behalf.

Therefore, we urge the public not to participate in any LGBTI campaigns regarding Africa that are led or influenced by Peter Tatchell or Outrage!, as they repeatedly put our lives in danger through their reckless, non-factual, and inflammatory press releases, letters, and calls to action.

As African LGBTI Human Rights Defenders, we are working toward the recognition of our rights by our

governments in Africa . We do not appreciate or accept the efforts of Western-based individuals or organisations who try to make our work for liberation into an ego-boosting publicity campaign for themselves. We condemn Peter Tatchell and Outrage! for their irresponsible journalism and a deplorable lack of respect for the very people they claim they are defending.

We will continue to work with our governments on the acknowledgement and protection of our basic human rights as African lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people. Furthermore, we will proudly defend our right as Africans to praise our governments when they protect and acknowledge us.

OUR MESSAGE

United as African LGBTI Human Rights Defenders, we send out the following messages:

To Peter Tatchell and Outrage!:

Stay out of African LGBTI issues. You have proven that you have no respect for conveying the truth with regards to Africa or consulting African LGBTI leaders before carrying out campaigns that have severe consequences in our countries. You have betrayed our trust over and over again.

This is neo-colonialism and it has no place in our struggle or in Africa .

To the Press:

Responsible journalism is one of the keys to social transformation and the protection of human rights. Verify information about Africa before publishing it. Consult the leaders of the LGBTI Movement in Africa about strategy and do not just spread any misinformation you find on the internet.

Abide by the rules of good journalism with regard to Africa , as you would be expected to do with regard to your own countries.

To the Public:

International collaboration can give strength to already vibrant LGBTI campaigns in Africa . Consult from reliable sources that investigate cases before they report, such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International (AI), and the International Gay and

Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). Peter Tatchell and Outrage! are not reliable sources on LGBTI issues in Africa and information from them should not be trusted or used as a basis for action.

PRESENT SITUATION

We fear that Peter Tatchell's sudden call for a campaign to pressure the Nigerian government regarding the proposed same-sex marriage prohibition might backfire and cause the oppressive homophobic bill's passage.

After being warned that the advice of Nigerian activists is to refrain from putting attention on the dormant bill, Outrage! looked for some individual in Nigeria to support them in the course they had already chosen to take. To serve this purpose, Leo Igwe's comments were quoted in George Broadhead's recent press release and are being taken out of context. While Leo is a very courageous friend and ally of the movement, Outrage! should have contacted and requested advice on strategy from the LGBTI Human Rights Defenders who led the original campaign against the bill from Nigeria .

Over the past ten months, Human Rights Defenders from the region and elsewhere have exercised a lot of formal and informal pressure on Nigerian law-makers to make sure the bill did not get passed into law. Until Outrage!'s action was issued, the bill was dead. By calling on people to begin a campaign at this stage, interest could be awakened in the bill. Outrage! is acting irresponsibly and in direct contradiction to the advice of leaders of the Nigerian LGBTI movement.

BACKGROUND

Just five months ago, a similar situation was evolving in Uganda . Outrage! had included unverified information in a press release on Uganda and was refusing to listen to the concerns of Ugandan LGBT Human Rights Defenders. After many conversations about the importance of accuracy, fact-checking, and consultation with genuine African activists, Ugandan Human Rights Defender Juliet Victor Mukasa, finally wrote directly to Peter Tatchell:

"You have included unverified information in your press releases and those allegations against the government are going to come back to us. You will sit

safely in London while our activists in Uganda pay the price for your deeds ... We have many people in the West who support our struggle, but they would not do anything to jeopardize our safety. ... You have shown a blatant disregard for the reputations and safety of legitimate activists in Uganda ... I know what effect your press releases have on my country. Please put a stop to all your press releases regarding my country. It must stop."

Immediately following the receipt of this message, Outrage! issued yet another press release on Uganda , and helped organise a demonstration against the Ugandan High Commission in London.

These examples from Nigeria and Uganda are just two out of many instances of breaches of trust and disregard for the work, wisdom, and lives of African Human Rights Defenders. We have repeatedly asked Outrage! to retract their calls to action and to restrain from any further action regarding LGBTI issues in Africa . Outrage! has refused. As we would do in the case of any person or organisation acting out of such blatant disrespect for the truth and for the people they claim to defend, we urge the public not to participate in LGBTI campaigns led by Peter Tatchell or Outrage! which pertain to our continent, Africa .

Signed:

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FOR A BETTER AFRICA!