

Press Statement

Issued By

Horizon Community Association [HOCA] Rwanda

in collaboration with

the Coalition of African Lesbians [CAL]secretariat

SEXUAL MINORITIES DEMAND RECOGNITION OF THEIR SEXUAL HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN RWANDA

The International Human Rights Day comes at a time in Rwanda where the majority of the people of Rwanda still suffer gross violation of human rights. Rwanda is a country that comes from a very painful history of discrimination. The majority of our people sustained illnesses including HIV/AIDS as a result of the past atrocities. This had more impact on vulnerable groups like women and children. We have proudly as a collective voice fought against any form of discrimination since then.

However, some groups continue to face marginalization and stigmatization in Rwanda including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people of Rwanda. Our country and our people refuse to recognize the fact that we exist said Naomi Ruzindana, President of HOCA. As far as they are concerned “there are no lesbians or gays in Rwanda; well, we are here, we exist she concluded. We are ordinary people like everyone and all we want is for our people and our government to recognize our existence and the fact that it is our basic human right to live our lives the way that we want and choose.

Our sexuality is an integral part of who we are as human beings and we want to be treated as such, human beings added Madoxy Mukandayisenga. Our constitution provides for equal protection of everyone in Rwanda by the law. We call on the government of Rwanda to withdraw sections 217 in the penal code that seek to criminalize homosexuality and other related sexual acts with

immediate effect. We believe that if this section is upheld, it will legitimize discrimination of groups of people that are already deeply marginalized by society.

Joan Musana Jones asserted that this will force lesbian and gay people to live false livelihoods and spend their lives in hiding and pretense thereby affecting their sexual health and wellbeing. This will further make us more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS because there will be no access to HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment programs relevant to our sexuality. So, we demand as we observe that International Human Rights Day that our government and our people recognize us for who we are and treat us with respect and dignity both in law and in practice.

For further details, you can contact

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Horizon Community Association [HOCA] is the only organization in Rwanda that advocates for justice and defends the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of Rwanda.

The Coalition of African Lesbians [CAL] is a network of organizations committed to African lesbian equality and visibility. We work to transform Africa into a place where all lesbians enjoy the full range of human rights, secure in the knowledge that we are recognized as full citizens, with rich and diverse cultures, and a significant and respected presence in all spheres of life, through personal and organizational growth. Our work is shaped by an African radical feminist understanding, informed by research, and strengthened by the claiming of social and economic power.

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