

Some church leaders join battle against Uganda's gay bill

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9 February (ENInews)--Following the re-introduction in Uganda of a bill that would harshly punish homosexuality, gay rights activists, including some church leaders, are uniting through Twitter and Facebook to oppose it.

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009 was revived on 7 January in parliament by David Bahati, the legislator who is its architect, prompting fresh protests worldwide, similar to those that led to its shelving in 2011.

"I am very disappointed with the return of the bill," former Anglican Bishop Christopher Ssenyonjo of West Buganda told ENInews in a telephone interview on 8 February from Kampala, Uganda's capital.

A significant change is the removal of the provision for the death penalty, but the new bill still increases to life imprisonment the punishment for homosexual activity, which is illegal in Uganda, with many faith leaders rejecting it as sinful and contrary to Scripture.

But Ssenyonjo criticized politicians for seeking popularity through the bill. He cautioned that it will not work in the long run. "As you can see, a lot needs to be done and we have to use all methods such as Twitter and Facebook," said the bishop who ministers to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people (LGBTs).

Action against the bill has been mounting on social networks including Twitter and Facebook. A petition seeking 5,000 signatures to urge President Yoweri Museveni and Parliament to reject the law is currently being signed by linking through the networks. It warns Uganda of isolation by the west over the bill.

In Kenya, Anglican priest Michael Kimindu, the African President of the Other Sheep, a gay rights group, said he will post tweets against it.

"It is un-African to suggest killing, whether it is because of sexual orientation or any other reason. We think this bill is very unfair. We are lobbying for its removal," said Kimindu.

According to Jane Wochaya, communications official at Gay Trust Kenya, the social networks were being used to unite calls for protection of homosexual rights in Uganda.

"The bill goes against the U.N. declaration of human rights and against fundamental basic human rights," she said.

LBGTs will not start new churches or mosques, according to her, but hoped for acceptance in the existing ones since the faiths stress love, acceptance and inclusion.