

Archbishop condemns murder of Ugandan gay human rights activist Friday 28 January 2011

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams has made the following statement regarding the murder of the gay human rights activist David Kato Kisulle in Uganda:

"The brutal murder of David Kato Kisule, a gay human rights activist, is profoundly shocking. Our prayers and deep sympathy go out for his family and friends - and for all who live in fear for their lives. Whatever the precise circumstances of his death, which have yet to be determined, we know that David Kato Kisule lived under the threat of violence and death. No one should have to live in such fear because of the bigotry of others. Such violence has been consistently condemned by the Anglican Communion worldwide. This event also makes it all the more urgent for the British Government to secure the safety of LGBT asylum seekers in the UK. This is a moment to take very serious stock and to address those attitudes of mind which endanger the lives of men and women belonging to sexual minorities."

David Kato Kisule

David Kato Kisule (1964 – January 26, 2011) was a Ugandan teacher and LGBT rights activist who was, considered a father of Uganda's gay rights movement. He served as advocacy officer for Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG). Kato was murdered in 2011, shortly after winning a lawsuit against a magazine which had published his name and photograph identifying him as gay and calling for him to be executed.

Earlier life

Born to the Kisule clan in its ancestral village of Nakawala, Namataba Town Council, Mukono District, he received the name "Kato" because he was the youngest of a pair of twins. He came out to his family members before he left to spend a few years in Johannesburg, South Africa during its transition from apartheid to multiracial democracy, becoming influenced by the end of the apartheid-era ban on sodomy and the growth of LGBT rights in the country. He came back to Uganda in 1998 and, not long afterward, was held in police custody for a week due to his activism. He became highly involved with the underground LGBT rights movement in Uganda, eventually becoming one of the founding members of SMUG. By 2010, he had quit his job as a school teacher in order to focus on his work with SMUG in light of the events surrounding the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill.

Rolling Stone case

Kato was among the 100 people whose names and photographs were published in October 2010 by the Ugandan tabloid newspaper Rolling

Stone in an article which called for their execution as homosexuals. Kato and two other SMUG members who were also listed in the article, Kasha Jacqueline and Onziema Patience, sued the newspaper to force it to stop publishing the names and pictures of people it believed were gay or lesbian. The photos were published under a headline of "Hang them" and were accompanied by the individuals' addresses. The petition was granted on November 2, 2010, effectively ruling for the end of Rolling Stone. Giles Muhame, the paper's managing editor, commented: "I haven't seen the court injunction but the war against gays will and must continue. We have to protect our children from this dirty homosexual affront." On January 3, 2011, High Court Justice V. F. Kibuuka Musoke ruled that Rolling Stone's publication of the lists, and the accompanying incitation to violence, threatened Kato's and the others' "fundamental rights and freedoms," attacked their right to human dignity, and violated their constitutional right to privacy. The court ordered the newspaper to pay Kato and the other two plaintiffs 1.5 million Ugandan shillings each.

Murder

On January 26, 2011, while talking on the phone with SMUG member Julian Pepe Onziema, Kato was assaulted in his home in Bukusa, Mukono Town by at least one unknown male assailant who hit him twice in the head with a hammer before fleeing on foot; Kato later died en route to the Kawolo Hospital. Kato's colleagues note that Kato had spoken of an increase in threats and harassment since the court victory, and they believe that his sexual orientation and his activism were the motive for the murder. Joe Oloka-Onyango, who worked with Kato on the court case, said, "This is a very strange thing to happen in the middle of the day, and suggests pre-meditation." According to reports in the New York Times and the Sydney Morning Herald, questions are being raised about the murder being linked to Kato's sexuality. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have both called for an in-depth and impartial investigation into the case, and for protection for gay activists. James Nsaba Buturo, the Ugandan Minister of State for Ethics and Integrity, is on record as having declared that "Homosexuals can forget about human rights".

A police spokesperson initially blamed the murder on robbers who have allegedly killed at least 10 people in the area over the last two months. Police arrested one suspect, Kato's driver, and were seeking a second. On February 2, 2011, police announced the arrest of Nsubuga Enock, saying that he had confessed to the murder. A police spokesperson described Enock as a "well-known thief" but stated as to Enock's alleged motive, "It wasn't a robbery and it wasn't because Kato was an activist. It was a personal disagreement but I can't say more than that." A police source alleged to the Uganda Monitor that Enock had murdered Kato because Kato would not pay him for sexual favours.

Kato's funeral was held on January 28, 2011, in Nakawala. Present at the funeral were family, friends and co-activists, many of whom wore t-shirts

bearing his photo in front, the Portuguese "la [sic] luta continua" in the back and rainbow flag colors inscribed onto the sleeves. However, the Christian preacher at the funeral preached against the gays and lesbians present, making comparisons to Sodom and Gomorrah, before the activists ran to the pulpit and grabbed the microphone from him, forcing him to retreat from the pulpit to Kato's father's house. An unidentified female activist angrily exclaimed "Who are you to judge others?" and villagers sided with the preacher as scuffles broke out during the proceedings. Villagers refused to bury Kato at his burial place; the task was then undertaken by his friends and co-workers, most of whom were gay.

Reactions

The murder was decried by Human Rights Watch, with senior Africa researcher Maria Burnett adding that "David Kato's death is a tragic loss to the human rights community." Amnesty International stated that it was "appalled by the shocking murder of David Kato," and called for a "credible and impartial investigation into his murder." Both also asked the Ugandan government to protect other gay rights activists.

U.S. President Barack Obama, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the State Department, and the European Union also condemned the murder and urged Uganda authorities to investigate the crime and to speak out against homophobia and transphobia. "I am deeply saddened to learn of the murder," Obama said. "David showed tremendous courage in speaking out against hate. He was a powerful advocate for fairness and freedom."

Rowan Williams, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury spoke on behalf of the Anglican Communion, "Such violence [as the death of David Kato] has been consistently condemned by the Anglican Communion worldwide. This event also makes it all the more urgent for the British Government to secure the safety of LGBT asylum seekers in the UK. This is a moment to take very serious stock and to address those attitudes of mind which endanger the lives of men and women belonging to sexual minorities."

For his newspaper's alleged role in the murder, Rolling Stone editor Giles Muhame stated "When we called for hanging of gay people, we meant ... after they have gone through the legal process ... I did not call for them to be killed in cold blood like he was." However, he stated that "I have no regrets about the story. We were just exposing people who were doing wrong."

From Wikipedia.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Kato