

‘We are half died’: Experiences of a Transgender Refugee in Uganda

By Anonymous

This article was written by a transgender refugee from Rwanda, now living in Uganda. The author shares their experiences of life as a transperson in Uganda, with particular reference to the recently passed ‘Anti-Homosexuality Act.’ Since the bill was signed by President Yoweri Museveni in February 2014, LGBTI people in Uganda have experienced an even greater number of human rights violations. Both their security and their livelihoods are gravely threatened, and at least one transgender person has been murdered in Kampala. Victims of LGBTI hate crimes are often afraid to report incidents to police and are left without legal recourse.¹

The author has requested to publish this article anonymously.²

Being a trans, being a sin! After all these years old, the sun shines every day but never on us. Abused, rejected, harassed and killed - as LGBTI people, we have faced so much horrible treatment by homophobic people, but now we are tired.

I am 32yrs old. When I was very young I was rejected by my dad and adopted. My mother was abused and tortured a lot because she was accused of making me the way that I am (trans). One day my mother was beaten almost to die because of me.

When my parents separated because of me, I was on the streets. All these things that have happened have given me ideas of suicide so many times. I had grown up being hated by people and finally I came to hate myself! Sometimes friends and people supported me so that I could live where I wanted to be. But one day I found my life in danger when I was seriously injured, arrested and tortured which caused me to leave my country [Rwanda].

I became a refugee in a homophobic place because of a lack of other options and because I was traumatised. I now live where I am not allowed to share my story with everyone, where I am not allowed to enjoy my life the way it is, where I am forced to regret why I was created. Me and people like me are in a horrible situation. In the market they change the prices because of you, in the church they preach about you, you have no access to justice, you fear police! I have no access to medical care because I fear doctors. Last year I was given the wrong medicine by a homophobic doctor. Many of us are not educated because we fear teachers. We have no refuge in any corner of life.

After what happened in Uganda, the law which was signed by the president, a few days later my name was changed. I am now called Obama, not because I am the president of America, but because he supports LGBTI people and rights, and I look like them! Many of us are no longer with our families, having been chased out a long time ago after this law, and others of us no longer have anywhere to sleep or anything to eat.

We are treated like animals by people. Recently my best friend was almost killed because of being trans. After being threatened, raped, arrested and tortured, we still have him, but it is now like a picture of him, not him. And when we see all these things, you say ‘tomorrow it will be me.’

Really, we are half died.

¹ <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/uganda-anti-homosexuality-act-prompts-arrests-attacks-evictions-flight-2014-05-15>

² The author of this article speaks and writes English as a second language. Where necessary, small grammatical and structural changes have been made to the article for purposes of improving clarity, with final approval by the author.