

Cameroon forcing gays to have anal probe exams

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By Tris Reid-Smith



The prison in Yaounde, Cameroon, where some of the LGBT people have been jailed.

Cameroon is forcing prisoners to have degrading and useless anal exams to find out if they have had gay sex, according to a new report.

Amnesty International says the criminal justice system in the west African country is being 'used as a weapon to attack lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex people'. The global human rights watchdog's report on Cameroon highlights a 'notable increase' since the mid-2000s in the number of gays – or suspected LGBT people – arrested, imprisoned and tortured because of their sexuality. In particular Amnesty says LGBTI people in custody are forced to undergo anal examinations. The discredited tests are falsely believed to show if someone has had gay sex.

Amnesty International's Cameroon researcher and author of the report, Godfrey Byaruhanga said: 'There's no justification whatsoever for this illegal, degrading treatment. It represents a severe breach of medical ethics and has to end immediately.' Amnesty told GSN its researchers found 30 cases where people have been arrested with many of them detained for periods ranging from a few days to more than a year. Others have been unwilling to speak about their arrest or have not wanted to be identified.

Defense lawyers for LGBTI people in Cameroon have recently received death threats against themselves and their children for defending gay people. While researchers can't confirm the sources of the death threats, activists suspect they are individuals linked to the government. Amnesty told GSN it was a major concern the government had not condemned the death threats and said there was virtually no evidence the security services were investigating them. Byaruhanga added: 'The government is adamant that it enforces the rule of law but has little to show for it on the ground. It has to prove that it means what it claims.'

Both gay and lesbian sexual acts are banned by section 347 of Cameroon's penal code, punishable by jail and a fine. Earlier this month, an appeals court overturned the conviction of two men who were jailed for 'looking gay' because they wore women's clothes and reportedly drank Baileys, an Irish whiskey and cream liqueur. Jonas Kimie and Franky Ndome spent more than a year in prison following their arrest outside a nightclub in the capital Yaoundé in July 2011. GSN also reported this month on the case of a trader in the north of the country who was

stoned to death after having gay sex with a 17-year-old.

Meanwhile, Jean-Claude Roger Mbede was arrested in March 2011 after sending a text to a man saying that he was in love with him. He suffered from malnutrition and regular beatings in jail, and his three-year sentence was upheld in December 2012. His lawyer, Alice Nkom, who also represented Kimie and Ndome is one of those who received death threats, as GSN reported in October last year.

Amnesty is not the first organization to express serious concern over the country's treatment of LGBT people. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights has also highlighted the issue. Homophobia is common in the country, with The Cameroonian Youth Rally organizing a 'Gay Hate Day' last August. The Amnesty International report 'Republic of Cameroon: make human rights a reality', is published today (24 January). It lists a wide variety of other human rights concerns, including unlawful killings and torture. It exposes how the authorities also seek to clamp down on political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists.

Source: [Gay Star News](#) .