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# Death penalty for gays?

## Uganda considers Bill to penalise those who fail to report on homosexuals

**KAMPALA (Uganda):** Proposed legislation would impose the death penalty for some gay Ugandans, and their family and friends could face up to seven years in jail if they fail to report them to authorities. Even landlords could be imprisoned for renting to homosexuals.

Gay rights activists say the bill, which has prompted growing international opposition, promotes hatred and could set back efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. They believe the bill is part of a continent-wide backlash because Africa's gay community is becoming more vocal.

"It's a question of visibility," said David Cato, who became an activist after he was beaten up four times, arrested twice, fired from his teaching job and outed in the Press because he is gay. "When we come out and ask for our rights, they pass laws against us."

The legislation has drawn global attention from activists across the spectrum of views on gay issues. The measure was proposed in Uganda following a visit by leaders of US conservative Christian ministries that promote therapy for gays to become heterosexual. However, at least one of those leaders has denounced the bill, as have some other conservative and liberal Christians in the United States.

Gay rights activists say the legislation is likely to pass. But the bill is still being debated and could undergo changes before a vote, which has not yet been set.

The Ugandan legislation in its current form would mandate a death sentence for active homosexuals living with HIV or in cases of same-sex rape. "Serial offenders" also could face capital punishment, but the legislation does not define the term. Anyone convicted of a homosexual act faces life imprisonment.

Anyone who "aids, abets, counsels or procures another to engage of acts of homosexuality" faces

seven years in prison if convicted. Landlords who rent rooms or homes to homosexuals also could get seven years and anyone with "religious, political, economic or

social authority" who fails to report anyone violating the act faces three years.

David Bahati, the legislator sponsoring the bill, said he was encouraging "constructive criticism" to improve the law, but insisted strict measures were necessary to stop homosexuals from "recruiting" schoolchildren.

"The youths in secondary schools copy everything from the Western world and America," said high school teacher David Kisambira.

"A good number of students have been converted into gays. We hear there are groups of people given money by

some gay organisations in developed countries to recruit youth into gay activities." — AP



**PERSECUTED:** David Cato, a Ugandan gay-rights activist who was beaten up four times, arrested twice, fired from his job and outed by the Press, in Kampala yesterday — APpic