



Friends Ugandan Safe Transport Fund

Olympia Friends Meeting
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Dear Friends -

Thank you so much for your assistance with *Friends Ugandan Safe Transport* (FUST) in this hour of great need. To bring you up to date, in October 2019 a bill was introduced into the Uganda Parliament calling for criminal penalties against LGBTQ people, including the death penalty. While the bill itself is not likely to be acted upon anytime soon, it reopened an active phase for expressions of homophobia and hatred throughout Uganda. In eastern Uganda alone, we know of five murders (with our contacts having witnessed two of them.) Eight radio stations and a tv station are airing anti-gay propaganda around the clock, and homophobic sermons are being preached from the pulpit, including by at least one Catholic bishop. People are being beaten in the streets or at markets, forced to leave school and families and are living in a constant climate of fear. We would note that little of this is allowed out by the press/media, which is pretty much confined to the capital Kampala.

Through your help and courageous action on the part of our “conductors,” 113 gay, lesbian, and transgender people, (including 38 members of Bulungi Tree Shade Friends Meeting – a welcoming and affirming Quaker Meeting in eastern Uganda; ‘bulungi’ means “welcome”) – have left Uganda, including 67 on Christmas Day itself. They are now all at their interim destinations, where they are well-housed, fed (many of them had been virtually starving), receiving medical care, and provided with services that will help them reach their final destinations around the world. Please note that funds from FUST are not used for this purpose, but only to facilitate the transport of those leaving Uganda, and for medical expenses of conductors and other directly involved in these efforts. Among the 113 were four gay members of the Ugandan Presidential Guard!

But it has been hard! And will continue to be so. Four “safe houses” had been set up in eastern Uganda. As there was not enough food, one transgender woman named Thelma ventured out of one of the houses to buy some bread at a market about a mile away, where she was beaten to death. (She had also been one of the conveners of the Buikwa Friends Worship Group.) Another

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individual, having just witnessed a lynching of a lesbian woman, was transporting a transgender person to safety when she was involved in a very serious motorcycle accident. She was transported by ambulance to Agha Khan Hospital (from experience they don't trust Ugandan hospitals) in Nairobi, Kenya, where she underwent seven hours of surgery for internal injuries. She is now back in Uganda and recovering well.

Sadly, the same cannot be said of Robert Mboise (one of the co-founders of Bulungi Tree Shade Friends Meeting) who had been helping individuals reach the safe houses. Robert was attacked, beaten, and left for dead. He was found the next day and eventually sent via ambulance to Agha Khan, where he underwent 10 hours of surgery to relieve intracranial hemorrhaging. The operation was a success, but just the beginning, as he has a major spinal cord injury and is likely to require additional emergency surgery. Robert is one of the most extraordinary people you might ever meet, and we are committed to doing whatever is necessary to assist in his recovery.

Meanwhile, our conductors have a confirmed list of 85 people awaiting transport. The safehouses are currently closed as there is no money for food or fuel, and with floods sweeping Uganda there are now cholera outbreaks that can easily be spread among people living in close quarters. So we are working on more fundraising efforts to get these people out, and we expect there will be more.

You have collectively already done so much! Since we started in 2014 when the first anti-gay legislation was introduced, with your financial support some 2,057 people in justified fear for their lives (with 12 murders along the way) left Uganda and are rebuilding their lives around the world.

We are blessed that we are able to do this work, and so grateful for your ongoing assistance in doing it. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to serve.

Handwritten signatures of Gabi Clayton and Kathleen O'Shaunessy in blue ink.

Gabi Clayton and Kathleen O'Shaunessy – Co-Managers
Friends Ugandan Safe Transport Fund – Olympia Friends Meeting

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