



Friends New Underground Railroad

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For Immediate Release
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Six LGBT Murders by Stoning Reported in Rural Uganda. Others Flee Vigilante Backlash to Repeal of Antigay Law

Uganda -- Over the past week, Ugandan activists have reported the horrific murders of six LGBT individuals in a rural zone of the country: three gay men, two lesbians and a transperson. "They were killed by stoning. One who survived (still breathing after stoning) was burnt alive using kerosene/paraffin and a match box," stated a witness and source to the Friends New Underground Railroad (FNUR), a grassroots Quaker solidarity initiative helping LGBT people in Uganda.

A seventh gay man was reported to have been attacked by a mob and died a day later from head injuries. According to the source, a rural vigilant mob attacked the 28-year-old gay man on August 5th. "I went to the scene," wrote the eyewitness in an email. "I saved [____] when I lied to the mob that let me take him to the police." Instead he put him on a boda boda, (motorcycle) and rescued him. The victim was later denied medical care, because he lacked funds. Documentary evidence of the attack was provided to FNUR, including pictures of the young gay man who died of his injuries on Monday, August 11 and buried two days later. Pictures provided from the scene show a young man sitting on the ground in a public street, his face and neck covered in blood. The sources have other details supporting the claim.

The reports come from several Ugandan activists, including those who helped rescue the head trauma victim. The reports were shared with Olympia, Washington-based FNUR (referred to as the 'Railroad') and then the Safe Passage Fund, a fund set up to help LGBT victims of persecution. The names, identities, and location of the victims and the witnesses are not being publicly disclosed by the FNUR for security reasons at this time. Local sources for the stonings say local radio stations in the zone have been broadcasting information about ongoing antigay incidents.

65 Evacuated Out of Uganda This Week

Over the past 24 hours, 65 LGBT individuals – including a Railroad "conductor," his wife and three children – were evacuated to safety across the border, according to FNUR's Gabi Clayton, co-manager of the Railroad project. Since the Railroad's debut in April, a total of 455 Ugandan LGBT individuals who sought help to leave Uganda were successfully helped with funding from Quaker groups, The Safe Passage Fund, churches, nonprofits and individual donors. Ally advocates have freely provided critical transitional safe housing, food, healthcare, legal aid, and other services for asylum seekers transited by the Railroad who generally have sought resettlement in third party countries. A growing number are now notably resettled in South Africa, Rwanda, Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway, France, Ireland, Denmark, and Germany. None are in refugee camps.

The new reports of antigay killings follow the recent repeal of Uganda's draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) by a Ugandan 5-judge court that deemed it unconstitutional on technical grounds, because Parliament had failed to collect a requisite minimal quorum vote (a third of MPs) last December. Christian evangelical leaders have in turn stepped up antigay messages on local radio stations that carry religious programming. Uganda's Attorney General, who publicly supports the antigay law, has since filed a motion to appeal the constitutional court decision.

"While the repeal of the law is wonderful, it has made it more dangerous for many LGBT people," stated Clayton. "It has also confused some potential donors who may think that things are better and the work of the Railroad is not needed – and that is far from true."

While LGBT rights groups are concentrated in the capital, Kampala, FNUR operates in rural areas where there is less media attention and fewer resources for LGBT people. The LGBT individuals being helped by the Ugandan conductors have not received assistance to flee the country from LGBT groups in Kampala – some saying they have asked and not been helped, others saying they have never heard of the organizations, say FNUR sources. They contact the conductors by word of mouth.

In recent weeks, the identities of two conductors of the Railroad were uncovered and they were brutally assaulted by mobs in separate incident, stated Clayton. The FNUR supported their medical evacuation for treatment in a third country and paid a portion of their medical bills.

Clayton says her project will not release names and details of sources and victims to the media in order to protect the security of field teams in the affected zones. While her team acknowledges such details can help others independently verify alleged incidents – and pressure authorities to respond, the decision comes at the behest of Railroad field agents. "Friends New Underground Railroad totally supports this decision," stated Clayton. "We don't believe that this will have a big impact on our donors because those who are giving to support this work are doing so with the understanding that this is an extremely dangerous situation for LGBT people in Uganda, and that is the whole point of our involvement." Still, she agreed, "Yes, it's important that these attacks be investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice. We want that to happen – but not at the price of anyone's safety."

Asked if she is aware that "many people are reporting that there is no truth to the claims made about the murders," Clayton responds, "It is unclear to us if they are calling us liars who are conning people, or dupes who have been conned and don't realize it. Or both. It really doesn't matter. We are not doing this for those people's approval. We – the Quakers in Olympia, WA and the activists we support in Uganda – understand the importance of corroborating the work they are doing. FNUR reports as much information as we can and operates this project as transparently as we are able – while protecting the identities of those whose work we support. They are on the ground working to save others. The safety and well-being of the activists/conductors and their passengers is our reason for creating FNUR and it is our only consideration. We respect and follow what the security team and others we work with in Uganda ask us to reveal or not to media folks and others."

Religious Groups Target Catholic Students

In recent months, students attending Ugandan Catholic and Christian universities, colleges and other schools have also been major targets of the national antigay witch hunt being coordinated by Ugandan evangelical bishops and clergy. They have demanded that Catholic educational institutions identify and expel any students suspected of being LGBT. Dozens of students have recently been "outed" and expelled at three universities, some then evicted by their families, their names and details of their private lives, including names of friends, have been broadcast on community radio stations. Attacks and threats have followed.

From May thru July, 22 gay male seminary students, over two dozen self-identified lesbians, and several trans students at three different Catholic universities were outed, went into hiding, and were provided successful safe passage out of Uganda. The 22 seminarians have been granted asylum and are now resettled in European countries. Several of the lesbian and transgender students are also in the process of being permanently resettled. Currently, 13 lesbian university students at another university are in hiding and hope to leave after being outed, according to FNUR sources.

Earlier tragedies: Reported LGBT suicides and desecrations

More suicides: In mid-April one of the conductors reported that a 25-year-old gay man “lost hope” and committed suicide after his group of 13 LGBT individuals ran out of food and water after 10 days of hiding in the bush. The 12 others were transported safely outside Uganda two days later. The Railroad also reported two suicides in rural Uganda involving a lesbian and a transperson. They allegedly killed themselves after their latest hiding place was discovered and a mob sought them out. Compounding these tragedies, the families of the two suicides allegedly refused to accept their bodies for burial. The bodies were dumped in the street, burned and desecrated by a mob, claimed a source who told the FNUR he went to retrieve the bodies after learning of the suicides. Four other suicides had been reported since the antigay bill in "From Torment to Tyranny," the May 2014 report by Uganda's national LGBT advocacy group Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG).

<http://www.sexualminoritiesuganda.com/Torment%20to%20Tyranny%2009-05-2014%20FINAL.pdf>

Arson and Evictions

Activists have also reported arson attempts, including an attack on three LGBT people inside a rural home that was set on fire by unidentified assailants in their community. The victims were treated for burn injuries by an outside religious charity. SMUG also reported on arson attacks against LGBT households in their May 2014 report. The arson attacks, coupled with a wave of ongoing evictions by landlords of LGBT persons, has fueled homelessness in rural areas.

The Urgent Need: \$5500

Friends New Underground Railroad seeks \$5500 today to cover the cost of safe transit for the 60 individuals who were in such a dangerous position that they were moved out of Uganda this week on borrowed money and credit that must be repaid immediately to generous individuals.

HELPING THE HERO(es): Safe Passage Fund joins FNUR in an additional fundraising appeal to support a heroic conductor – a straight ally married man with three children. “He has been a true hero” stated Clayton of her colleague, who personally helped to rescue, shelter, and transit more than 100 rural LGBT people to safety since April 2014. His identity was discovered in recent days by anti-gay forces and he faced immediate death threats, while his wife and 5-year old were threatened with gang rape. On Thursday, a Railroad team successfully moved this family out of Uganda. They are now in the process of resettling to a third country for asylum. \$1920 is sought urgently to cover the evacuation and transitional resettlement expenses. For details, see:

<http://friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org/please-help-us-save-one-of-our-conductors-anappeal/>

Beyond these known individuals, more LGBT individuals remain in Uganda who are seeking assistance from the conductors to relocate inside and outside the country. Every request, along with reported threats and incidents are vetted and documented by local field teams working in strict confidentiality within a hostile environment. The activists/conductors respond to evacuation requests as soon as they can and move people as resources/funds are available. They have a remarkable track record to date,

despite the very underground nature of this emergency work. Once those leaving are outside Uganda, other ally groups and individuals provide transitional safe housing, food, healthcare and legal support and more for those seeking asylum.

We are seeking small or large donations – \$10, \$20, \$50, \$100 or more – many hands to help.

If you have given to the Quaker Railroad or this Fund before, you can take pride in our collective success in helping so many rural LGBT in Uganda – and straight allies – escape danger. Please give again if you are able, and please ask others to donate as well. All donations are tax exempt. The Quaker-supported Railroad effort is an all-volunteer global solidarity initiative. All monies raised go only toward emergency transit costs – no admin or overhead.

MEDIA INQUIRIES:

Further details about allegations, attacks and incidents discussed in this alert will be made public at the FNUR website as security issues are addressed.

To contact Friends New Underground Railroad, email Gabi Clayton, co-clerk of the Olympia Friends Meeting's Peace and Social Justice Committee and co-manager of the Railroad project at gabiclayton@friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org or call US (360) 888-5291; or email Talcott Broadhead, FNUR co-manager at talcottbroadhead@friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org.

Anne-christine d'Adesky is founder of FNUR partner, Safe Passage Fund. The Fund is collecting funds under the fiscal umbrella of the Olympia Friends Meeting, a US 501(c)3 nonprofit religious organization. For information about the Safe Passage Fund, or to inquire about emergency grant requests, contact: talktothefuture@gmail.com. Attn: Administrator. Note: Safe Passage Fund published a different version of this statement.

On the web:

Friends New Underground Railroad: <http://friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/FriendsNewUndergroundRailroad>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/FrNewUndergrRR>

Olympia Friends Meeting: <http://olympiafriends.org>

"Regarding Uganda's Passage of A Law Targeting Its LGBTQ Population" (Minute approved on April 13, 2014) <http://olympiafriends.org/about-us/minutes-and-statements/regarding-ugandas-passage-of-a-law-targeting-its-lgbtq-population>

This statement is online at: <http://friendsnewundergroundrailroad.org/?p=515>