

Reject Regressive Clauses in Sexual Offences Bill

Proposed law promotes hatred and discrimination, criminalises consensual sex

(For Immediate Release / Kampala, May 8, 2021) The Parliament of the Republic of Uganda passed the Sexual Offences Bill on May 4, 2021. The final text of the legislation has not been published, nor has the President assented to the law. But reports gleaned from parliamentary proceedings, committee reports, press coverage, and other related documents point to a concerning and unjustifiable limitation of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Chapter Four will take a deep analysis of human rights implication of the law when the final text is published but hopes that Uganda's lawmakers will honour the major objectives of the legislation: preventing sexual violence; enhancing punishment; and protecting victims. These problems are dangerously urgent. The world has seen an alarming rise in sexual offenses since pandemic-related lockdown measures were put into place; and Uganda is no exception.

Chapter Four hopes that these objectives are not being side-lined by opportunistic lawmakers' intent on spreading hatred and discrimination of the LGBTI community, sex workers and other vulnerable groups.

Chapter Four is disturbed by remarks in the [Parliamentary Committee Report](#) (February 2021) regarding false allegations, the withdrawal of consent to sexual acts and marital rape, among other remarks, which are gravely misinformed.

During the legislative process, Chapter Four submitted a [written memorandum](#) to the Committee with a view of contributing to the improvement of the draft law. We regret to note that several recommendations in the memorandum on salient issues were not considered.

'We encourage the President to take counsel on the broader text of the law with the view of keeping the core element of the law highlighted above and rejecting the hate driven, populist and discriminative aspects of the law, if any', said Clare Byarugaba, the Coordinator – Equality and Non-discrimination program at Chapter Four Uganda.

'We hope that in exercising his Executive authority the President will seek to protect all sections of the community from abuse or discrimination and will steer clear of regressive moralistic tendencies in legislation', said Lynne Wells, Special Counsel at Chapter Four Uganda.

Chapter Four Uganda is an independent non-profit organisation working to protect civil liberties and promote human rights for all.