

Christian leaders oppose Uganda's anti-gay bill

Adelle M. Banks Religion News Service | Dec. 8, 2009

Christian leaders who are themselves divided over homosexuality have joined forces to oppose a proposed Ugandan law that calls for the death penalty for some homosexual behavior.

"Our Christian faith recognizes violence, harassment and unjust treatment of any human being as a betrayal of Jesus' commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves," reads the statement released Monday (Dec. 7) and signed by dozens of leaders.

"As followers of the teachings of Christ, we must express profound dismay at a bill currently before the Parliament in Uganda."

The bill calls for those convicted of involvement in homosexual acts to be sentenced to life in prison and those convicted of "aggravated homosexuality" to receive the death penalty.

Signatories include Jim Wallis, president of Sojourners; the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference; Bryan N. Massingale, president of the Catholic Theological Society of America; evangelical activist Brian McLaren; Jim Winkler, general secretary of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society; and Thomas P. Melady, former U.S. ambassador to Uganda and the Vatican.

The joint statement, organized by Faith in Public Life and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, follows a declaration by Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori that "potential impingement on basic human rights" are threatened by the proposed Ugandan legislation.

"...(A)ttempts to export the culture wars of North America to another context represent the very worst of colonial behavior," she said in her Dec. 4 statement. "We deeply lament this reality, and repent of any way in which we have participated in this sin."

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