



24 February 2014 – Uganda’s new anti-homosexuality law criminalises and imposes sentences of life imprisonment for homosexuality, same-sex marriage and "aggravated homosexuality".

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has denounced the anti-homosexuality law signed into force today in Uganda. According to Pillay, the law will institutionalise discrimination against lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and could encourage harassment and violence against them.

“Disapproval of homosexuality by some can never justify violating the fundamental human rights of others,” Pillay said.

“This law will institutionalise discrimination and is likely to encourage harassment and violence against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation. It is formulated so broadly that it may lead to abuse of power and accusations against anyone, not just LGBT people”, she said in her statement.

Pillay stressed that Uganda is obliged, both by its own constitution and by international law, to respect the rights of all individuals and to protect them from discrimination and violence.

The human rights commissioner also fears that the law could threaten the critically important

work of human rights defenders in the country, urging the Government to take immediate steps to ensure that they are not prosecuted for their advocacy.

“With the HIV infection rate rising in Uganda, the law will have a negative impact on efforts to prevent transmission and provide treatment for people living with HIV, as well as undermine the Government’s commitment to non-discriminatory access to healthcare,” the High Commissioner said.

On claims that the new law will protect children from abuse, Pillay said that outlawing consensual same-sex relations between adults would not have any bearing on the protection of children from abuse. She urged the Government to instead strengthen implementation of its laws and policies to prevent and prosecute such abuse.

The High Commissioner expressed hope that the new law would be reviewed at the earliest opportunity in light of its fundamental conflicts with Uganda’s constitution and its international human rights obligations.

The law provides for prison sentences of five to seven years for the “promotion” of, “attempts to commit”, “aiding and abetting” and “conspiracy to engage in” homosexuality.