

Uganda, like many African states, has a strong intolerance for homosexuality, as well as sexual diversity in general, which poses an extreme risk to the personal security of LGBT individuals, including foreign travelers visiting the country. Violence against local LGBT community members is widespread and frequently perpetuated by local media and government officials. One of the most notable examples is a Ugandan tabloid *Rolling Stone* publication in October 2010 that featured the names, addresses, and photographs of 100 suspected homosexuals in Uganda with the headline of “Hang Them” over the article. In January 2011, LGBT activist David Kato and one of the individuals named in the article were murdered at Kato’s home. In February, the Ugandan tabloid, *Red Pepper*, published “Top Uganda Gay Recruiters Busted” on its front page, and followed the headline with the published names and photographs of people suspected to be gay living in Uganda. Ugandan LGBT activists and victims of personal vendettas are most typically targets of attacks.

Currently, the Ugandan parliament is pushing to pass the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Introduced in 2009, the bill would impose severe criminal penalties on homosexuals. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill was originally introduced with a provision that certain behaviors be considered “aggravated homosexuality,” and proposed punishment of death, which has reportedly been revised to life imprisonment. The bill includes language requiring extradition of Ugandan citizens convicted of engaging in homosexual behavior back to Uganda for punishment. As of March 13, 2013, the bill is still pending in the Ugandan parliament. The majority of the local population sees homosexuality as a “morally wrong” behavior.

LGBT rights groups are almost non-existent in Uganda, and the government in June 2012 banned 38 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from operating in the country on grounds that the groups “exist not for humanitarian reasons but to destroy the traditions and culture of this country by promoting homosexuality.” Despite the ban, Frank Mugisha, head of the NGO Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), announced the organization would defy the ban and continue operating in Uganda.

### **Before Departure**

- Remove any personal or professional references to LGBT issues or preferences from online media and social media websites.
- Change all social media profiles that may indicate an interest in the same gender to reflect an interest in the opposite gender. Removal of interest altogether can be seen as a sign of homosexuality.
- Do not travel with any apparel, jewelry, or media that may indicate sympathy toward LGBT issues.

### **During Visit**

- Strictly avoid discussing or expressing any LGBT-related topics or viewpoints.
- Dress in a manner similar to local residents and in alignment with traditional heterosexual gender roles.
- Do not make contact or associate with individuals suspected by locals as being homosexual. Supporting homosexuality or being perceived as an accomplice is a chargeable offense and can incite violence or antagonism from local residents.
- Do not divulge sexuality to individuals who would normally be required to maintain confidentiality. Typically trusted professions, such as doctors or religious leaders charged with receiving confessions, are required to report a suspected LGBT individual to the authorities.
- Maintain awareness of local newspapers and magazines for publication of suspected LGBT individuals.
- Should a local resident indicate suspicion of the traveler’s sexuality, avoid all future visits to the location. Ugandans can be vocal of their suspicions and refuse service at businesses.
- Be aware of surroundings at all times, especially if travel after sunset is required. Suspected lesbians are at an even greater risk from males believing they can “cure” a female into preferring a male partner.