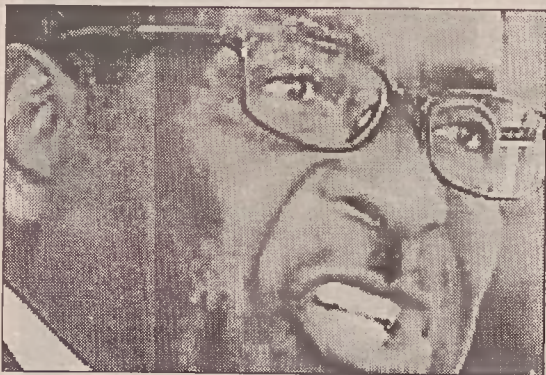


State-sponsored homophobia in South Africa

Abuses and culture of intolerance documented, despite being first country to include anti-bias edict in its after-apartheid Constitution



Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe described gays and lesbians as 'worse than dogs and pigs.'

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA — Many leaders in southern Africa have singled out lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people as scapegoats for their countries' problems. Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission said.

The two international human rights monitoring organizations released a new book-length report, *More Than a Name: State-Sponsored Homophobia and its Consequences in Southern Africa*. The 298-page report documents pervasive harassment and violence against sexual minorities in Botswana,

Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. "LGBT people have been vilified by presidents and political leaders, which has led to a culture of intolerance," said Paula Ettelbrick, executive director of IGLHRC.

"These attacks are just the first step in creating a climate in which all rights are at risk."

The report documents verbal attacks, police harassment, official crackdowns and community violence aimed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Victims have been assaulted, imprisoned, expelled from schools, fired from jobs, denied access to medical care, evicted from their home, and driven into exile or, in some cases, to suicide.

"When Southern African political leaders like President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe make speeches saying that gays and lesbians are 'worse than dogs and pigs' it should be no surprise that violent attacks follow," said Scott Long, HRW co-author of the report.

The report also examines South Africa, which in 1996, newly freed from apartheid, became the first country in the world to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in its constitution. Based on interviews with numerous individuals and activists, the report concludes that the equality guaranteed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people is fragile, and even endangered by the silence and foot-dragging of political leaders in South Africa.

Human Rights Watch and IGLHRC called

on the governments of all five countries to refrain from promoting intolerance and from inciting discrimination and abuse.

Other recommendations include:

- *Repealing laws* — including sodomy laws — which violate human rights, rights to privacy and freedom of expression;
- *Enacting positive protections* against discrimination;
- *Publicizing and promoting awareness* of rights protections and how to use them; and
- *Creating mechanisms to address discrimination and abuse* of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

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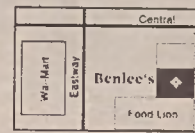
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