

# Nigeria's intolerance of homosexuality disturbs human rights activists

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DUBLIN- Nigeria's recently passed anti-gay laws are not something one would expect to encounter outside areas of major media coverage, nor would Dublin be the place one would expect to encounter coverage of this legislation.

Founded in 2000, Metro Eireann is Ireland's leading multicultural newspaper, catering mainly to the diverse population of Dublin. The Metro Eireann International Leadership Award ceremony was held on Jan. 17. Notable guests included Ireland's Minister of State for Trade and Development Joe Costello and Ni-

geria Ambassador to Ireland Felix Pwol.

The 2013 award was presented to the Nigerian Governor of Delta State, Emmanuel Uduaghan. Since becoming governor, Uduaghan has initiated his three-point program of peace and security, human capital development and infrastructural development, the current success of which led to his recognition by Metro Eireann.

Upon receiving the award, Uduaghan devoted his acceptance speech to defending Nigeria's Same-Sex Prohibition Act, which had been signed into law by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan several days prior to the event. In his speech, Uduaghan compared homosexuality to pedophilia in an effort to relate

the Nigerian law to a largely Western audience and concluded by advising all homosexual people in Nigeria to migrate to other countries where same-sex relations are accepted.

The Same-Sex Prohibition Act, which was signed into law on Jan. 7, not only forbids the recognition of gay marriage in Nigeria but also sentences anyone convicted of same-sex relations to up to 14 years in prison. Those involved "directly or indirectly" with a gay organization or those who merely fail to notify law enforcement of other people's homosexual conduct could face up to 10 years in prison. Consequent arrests have begun, and in the state of Bauchi, major news sources are reporting police have allegedly used torture on convicted gay men.

"Rarely have I seen a piece of legislation that in so few paragraphs directly violates so many basic, universal human rights," said United Nations Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay in a statement.

Pillay said she hoped the Supreme Court of Nigeria would soon review the constitutionality of the law.

"Rights to privacy and non-discrimination, rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, rights to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention. This law undermines all of them," she said.

Indeed, the Western world seems to have condemned Nigeria for the recent legislation, fearing that the laws will not only limit freedom of assembly but will also begin to deter relief and education efforts regarding HIV/AIDS. Other countries have not yet cut their humanitarian funds to Nigeria.

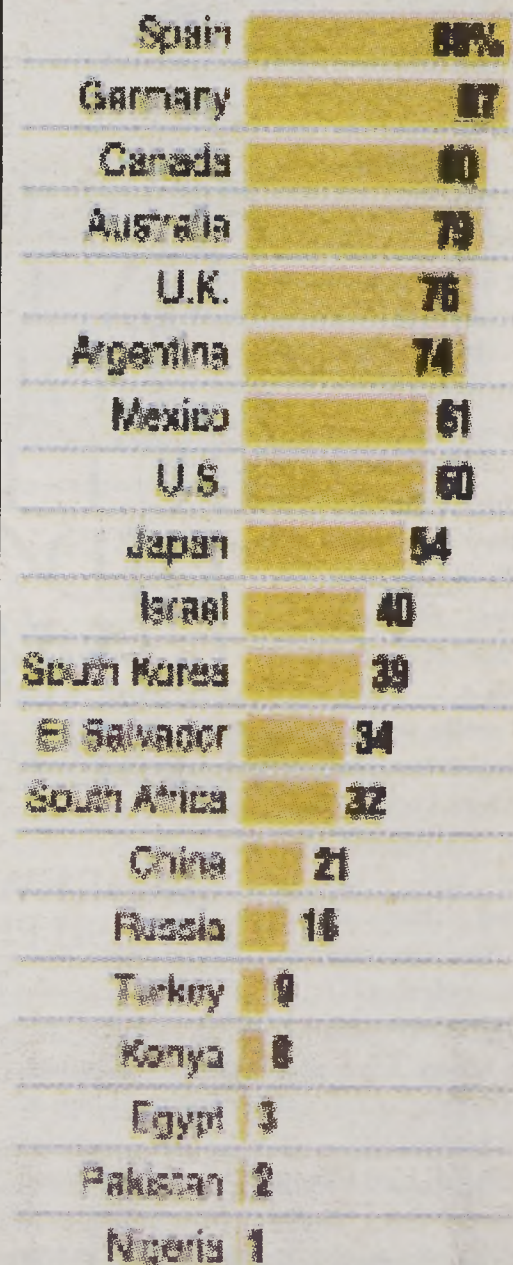
A 2013 Pew Research report found that Nigeria is the world's least tolerant country of homosexuality with approximately 98 percent of the country's population opposing society's acceptance of homosexuality.

Previously during the "Metro Eireann" award ceremony, all other award recipients had referenced initiatives towards same-sex rights, presumably inciting Uduaghan's speech. One of these recipients was President of the European Parliament's Development Committee Michael McGowan.

"We all want a planet where we live in peace and security together," McGowan said in his speech. "It is not about implementing what we sometimes arrogantly call 'European values' or even 'African values.' These are universal human values."

## Views on homosexuality

Percent of people in each country who think society should accept gays, lesbians



Source: Pew Global Attitudes survey of 800-3,000 adults, March 2-May 1, 2013. Margins of error: ±2.5-3.5%.  
 Percentage points  
 Graphic: Paul Chen

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS  
 Nigeria is ranked last in a Pew report on countries tolerant of homosexuality.

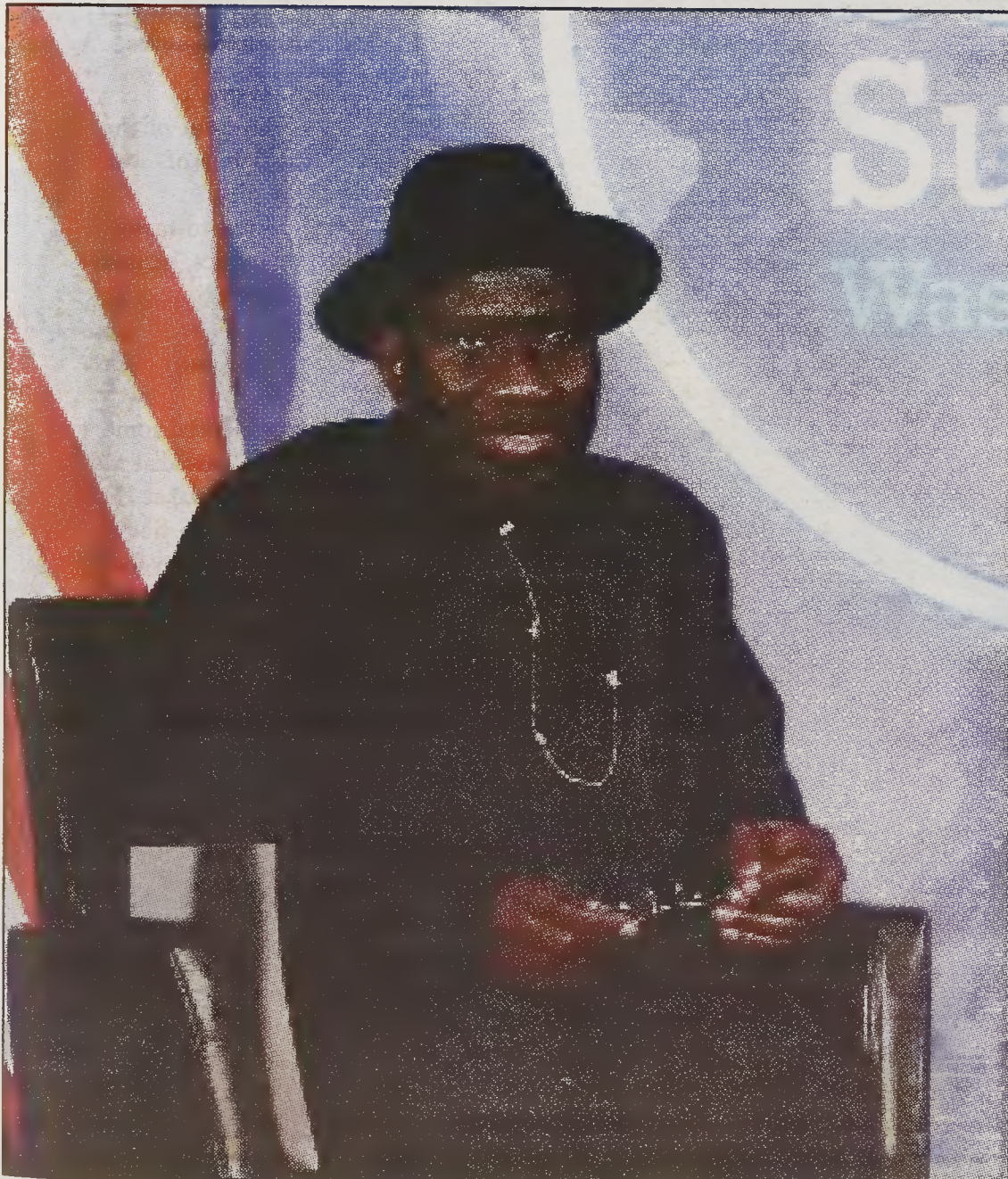


PHOTO COURTESY OF MCT CAMPUS  
 Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan recently signed the Same-Sex Prohibition Act which forbids gay marriage and makes homosexuality a crime punishable by up to 14 years in prison.