



End of 16 Days of Activisms Event/End of Year Event

10th Dec 2019

Executive Directors' Speech

Distinguished Guests,

Partners and Stakeholders,

Allies and colleagues and members.

I am very pleased to be here today to commemorate not only the last day of the 16 Days of Activism but also mark the end of the year in style. I thank our team for organizing today's event, especially those who played critical role into making this happen. It is fundamental to the cause of human rights that we promote equality, and the protection of all people from discrimination and violence – from our boys and girls, men and women, single or married, heterosexual or same sex, in whatever bracket fits you best.

It should be obvious that there are many different ways to be a human being. We need to respect and embrace these differences -- *not criminalise them, not attack people, not deprive them of equal rights* or the protection of the law, just because they are seen as “different”. The struggle for the rights of LGBTI people, our young girls and women is a core part of the human rights struggle. And yet in many parts of our nation specifically in Mombasa, young girls, women and the members of the LGBTI community continue to be the targets of brutal attacks, many of which are left unpunished. It is essential that we defend and protect them, from every kind of violence and discrimination.

There should be nothing “*controversial*” about stopping people being murdered, or executed by agents of the government, simply because of who we are or whom we love. Tackling extreme violence does not require new norms. Seventy-one years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed that everyone, without distinction “*has the right to life, liberty and security of the person.*” When there is a pattern of hate-motivated violence – one, for example, based on gender, sexual orientation or gender identity – and the government does not act to prevent, and effectively address, those attacks, it is failing to live up to that obligation.

Partners and stakeholders,

Worse still, when the victims of attacks when they seek protection, they are frequently subjected to intimidation and abuse, including from police and justice officials. And more so, do not track homophobic and transphobic crimes. The result is impunity. Too many victims go without recognition, remedy or justice. Too many perpetrators are free to strike again, undeterred by the prospect of rule of law.

I want to aloud the government for having been able finally decide to count intersex persons in the just recently concluded censuses exercise in August. Intersex people, too, face violence. There have been reports of the killing of young intersex babies. Some intersex children are subjected to harmful practices in medical settings. And very few measures had been taken to action to protect intersex children from such harm.

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Advancing social inclusion and human rights



We, the LGBTI people, young girls and women, are entitled to equal protection, and the same rights as everyone else. I am encouraged by the fact that an unprecedented number of people and organizations are now committed to acting to prevent and address killings and violence against these sexual and gender-based violence against young girls, women and the LGBTI people.

But we need for each and every responsible institution mandated by the government of Kenya to protect rights for all, to step up their efforts to address these crimes; to prevent extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; rape; and to protect all people, without discrimination.

Allies,

Tragically, the issue is not only the inadequate response by the government to violence against women, girls and the LGBTI people. It is in this same country where we had the Repeal162 ruled against our favor and so the law that criminalizes consensual same sex relationships is still unrepealed. These laws implicitly encourage prejudice, hatred and violence.

But laws can change!

In India, we saw a landmark decision by the Supreme Court, decriminalizing same-sex relationships. This important discussion is taking place all over the world. Not only in Europe and North America – it is moving forward in Africa, in Asia, in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. I welcome these vital changes. We need to see more countries taking steps to bring their laws and practices in line with the fundamental equality of all their people.

But we need more! We need to change minds!

At the core of killings and violence against LGBTI community, young girls and women is prejudice and hate. We will only prevent these crimes if we are brave enough to address these factors, across society. I am proud of the work my organization is doing to open people's hearts and minds and change perceptions and attitudes through its multi-stakeholder initiatives as well as information sharing. Over the last 16 days from today we have been able to see the #16DaysOfActivism digital campaign that we have run. This is one of our public information initiatives ever undertaken, and it has reached thousands of people within our boarder and even beyond.

We also need education, education, education. Respect for diversity – including in relation to LGBTI people – should be reflected in school curricula and reinforced through effective public information campaigns. We need the societal leaders, business community, religious leaders, families, the media and the governments' key actors, to play a positive role.

Members,

I believe that profound, positive change is possible. I have seen it in my own lifetime. It can be done. With your help, and the help of many others, we can prevent killings, violence, humiliation and fear for women and girls and in our LGBTI community.

We can conquer hate.

#16DaysOfActivism #TogetherWeCanStopSGBV #GenerationEquality

Thank you

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