



PRESS RELEASE ON THE LGBTQIA+ SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA, 07 AUGUST 2023

House of Guramayle condemns the recent escalation in attacks on individuals in Ethiopia based on their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. In the last two weeks alone, House of Guramayle and LGBTQIA+ activists have documented over a dozen TikTok videos displaying pictures of people who may or may not identify as LGBTQIA+, including those who live in Ethiopia. Violence against those individuals - killing, burning, beating - is being encouraged openly. As a result, individuals suspected of belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community are being physically attacked in Ethiopia.

In a dramatic expansion of the threat of violence, there have also been calls to kill, burn, and beat up families of those who are openly LGBTQIA+ and live abroad in order to make their families understand the “deep shame” and “wound” that Ethiopian homophobes in the diaspora feel due to the outspokenness of those openly LGBTQIA+ individuals.

On August 1, three public demonstrations took place in Addis Ababa around the city’s popular streets and intersections. These events were then broadcast live on TikTok, encouraging followers to take matters into their own hands. While these three incidents were instigated by individuals, anti-LGBTQIA+ movements are calling for a public rally scheduled to take place at Meskel Square on Sunday, August 6, 2023.

On Friday, August 4, the Addis Ababa Tourism Bureau released [a statement](#) on its official Facebook page stating that it is working to bring attention to hotels and restaurants that are allegedly providing services to LGBTQIA+ persons. This makes it the first government body to openly acknowledge the ongoing situation. The following day, on August 5, the Addis Ababa Police Commission issued [a statement](#) echoing the Tourism Ministry's message. The Addis Ababa Police Commission has encouraged the public to report business establishments that allow “homosexual activities”--a generalisation that could lead to the incrimination of anyone, regardless of their sexual or gender identity.

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House of Guramayle is concerned that the Police Commission's silence on the arbitrary attacks and hate speeches citizens are currently being subjected to could be seen as an open endorsement that will embolden the perpetrators of violence.

While similar increases in attacks against LGBTQIA+ communities are being reported by human rights organisations in other parts of the African continent, the escalation in Ethiopia is especially concerning due to the country's religious history, current worsening socio-political climate, and growing nationalism. The topic of LGBTQIA+ rights has recently been sensationalized, with vitriolic opposition and scapegoating spreading around the country and the diaspora at an alarming rate.

House of Guramayle calls for LGBTQIA+ communities around the world, allies, civil society, and international human rights organizations to stand in solidarity with the Ethiopian LGBTQIA+ community.

We urge the government of Ethiopia to provide protection to the LGBTQIA+ community from mob attacks.

House of Guramayle also calls for social media platforms such as Meta, YouTube, and TikTok to improve the efficacy of their hate speech detection procedures and promptly take down videos that call for violence in Ethiopian languages.

For more information and how you can support please reach out to info@houseofguramayle.org.

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