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**OMCT** **fidh**  
SOS-Torture Network  
The Observatory  
for the Protection  
of Human Rights Defenders



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

### UGANDA : Brutal killing of a sexual rights activist

**Geneva-Paris-Kampala, January 28, 2011. *The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) condemn the assassination of Mr. David Kato, advocacy officer of the organisation Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), in a context of serious stigmatisation and criminalisation of homosexuality and defenders of sexual rights.***

On January 26, 2011, at around 2pm, Mr. **David Kato** was brutally beaten to death at his home in the area of Mukono, close to Kampala. An unidentified man allegedly entered his house and beat him with a hammer. The man then fled in a car which registration number was noted down by a witness. Mr. Kato died on his way to Kawolo Hospital. The police has started to investigate the case, and some suspects have reportedly been arrested.

Mr. David Kato had been receiving death threats following publication in the Ugandan newspaper *Rolling Stone* in 2010 of pictures, names and addresses of several people, alleging that they were homosexuals. Mr. Kato's picture appeared on the front page of the newspaper with the head line "Hang them!".

Together with three other people, Mr. Kato had filed a lawsuit against *Rolling Stone*. On January 3, 2011 the Ugandan Supreme Court ordered the newspaper to stop publishing pictures of allegedly homosexual people on the grounds that it violates their right to privacy.

The issue of sexual minority rights is a particularly sensitive one in the country at this time. Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda and can be sanctioned by up to fourteen years imprisonment. In October 2009, an Anti-Homosexuality Bill was put forward by a Member of Parliament in order to render homosexuality punishable by life detention and death penalty for persistent offenders. Despite strong international condemnation, this bill is still under discussion. SMUG is a fervent opponent to this bill.

The Observatory and FHRI urge the Ugandan authorities to order an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the assassination of Mr. David Kato, prosecute all those responsible and try them before a competent and impartial tribunal.

Moreover, our organisations call on the authorities to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all the people whose names and pictures were published in *Rolling Stone* as well as all sexual rights defenders in Uganda.

The Observatory and FHRI strongly condemns the worrying increase of acts of harassment against sexual rights defenders, which blatantly violate regional and international instruments on human rights, in particular the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. The Ugandan authorities should also comply

in all circumstances with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 9, 1998.

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