

CITIZENS VOICES

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About Citizens Rights Watch:

Citizens Rights Watch is an independent, Non Profit, Non-Governmental organization dedicated to monitor worldwide governments, and watch their efforts to provide, facilitate, enhance and protect, citizens' rights. By focusing international attention where citizens' rights are ignored, CRW gives voice to citizens in holding their governments accountable, and into bringing benefits justice to citizens around the world.

APPLY for an Internship,

more info at:

JOIN OUR FIGHTS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL, EVERYWHERE & FOREVER!

Join us, check our Website, Twitter or Facebook, and stay connected, informed & take action with us!

How CRW Works?

Citizens Rights Watch, is an international human rights non-governmental organization comprised by professional volunteers from around the globe. Its volunteers include politics experts, lawyers, journalists, and academics.

Citizens Rights Watch is utilizing new technologies, and through online activism, is raising awareness of human rights violations, focuses on educating the people about their rights, and advocates through all media possible for citizens' rights around the world.

Philosophy:

Citizens Rights Watch promotes, supports, and work as an effective tool to protect Human Rights as stated in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Vision:

Monitor governments' compliance to THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS with focus on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Mission:

To encourage and drive ruling authorities in the world to focus on their citizens rights. Through online activism, and by using innovative technological tools, to push for the realization of universal human rights.



Eleanor Roosevelt and United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Spanish.

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Sierra Leone has gone through turbulent moments in her history, with the brutal civil war (1991 – 2002) which marked the climax of nurtured grievances and political instability, resulting to the death of thousands of people while millions were displaced. During this period, youths (18–35 years) were both perpetrators and victims of human rights violations. It is observed that it has been a dual role which youths had become accustomed to during the post-independence era when they became both the abusers and the abused. They were the instruments of oppression, acting as vicious thugs to influence the outcomes of elections and to put down anti-government demonstrations; they have greatly struggled to find its rightful place in the society (TRC Report, 2004). According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, experiences of the youths during the war have disrupted their lives and traumatised them. As a result, many are currently moving without direction, unable to access education or employment. Some are arguably disillusioned with their environment they are desperately seeking a way out and would readily resort to violence.

The post war era saw the formulation and implementation of various development programmes aimed at moving the country from conundrum; hence security, justice and public sector reforms among others are laudable ventures. In all these, the youths are considered pivotal. It is reported that over 70 percent of the country's population are under the age 30 constituting a third of the country's citizens, making Sierra Leone a country of young people and one that can only move forward relying on their energy, resilience and creativity for national development (Revised Youth Policy, 2014). In line with this, the Government has developed a number of youth policies and programmes such as establishing a youth ministry, youth commission and presidential youth aide to design and champion youth affairs programmes across the country in line with the Revised National Youth Policy 2014. The purposes of these policies and institutions are commendable; and have benefited individuals and communities across Sierra Leone to some extent, with a good number of youths taking leadership roles in nation building supported by government and individuals. On the contrary, it is discouraging to know that the current trend of many youth posture is arguably undermining national development.

It seems to me that the purposes of policies and programmes have not yield expected outcome as behavior and attitude of youths posing serious threat to national security and development. Many youths have reverted to violence, forming themselves into well-known groups of gangs and cliques, causing mayhem across cities and towns. Their activities range from violent attacks on individuals and residences they perceived opposed to their activities; disrupting sporting activities such as football matches and athletics competitions; musical shows; and political rallies among others. Some of these incidents have resulted to death and serious casualties which often result to police action. In some cases police intervention is meted with violent confrontations from these gangs and often led to arrests.

Even schools and tertiary institutions which are known to be agents of change have become breeding grounds for youth hooliganism. There is fear that these groups could be easily manipulated by influential individuals or groups for their selfish gains. The brutal war started just in such a form with serious youth radicalization especially at the Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, in which students are presently divided along ideological lines with varying support from the wider political realm.

Part of the problem of youth violence has been poor reintegration programmes since many child soldiers were not properly reintegrated with their families, some of them are finding it difficult to cope with civic demands of society. They should have been monitored to see that they acclimatized well. Unemployment has been a contributing factor to the problem which the government is grappling with. One would argue that many youths are unemployable considering that they lack the necessary skills required for the job market; however a good number of employable youths are without jobs. Unemployment figures in Sierra Leone tend to downplay the problem of underdevelopment and poverty which are widespread among the youths in the country. Youth chances of getting paid jobs are lesser as compare to those above the youth bracket (Sierra Leone Youth Report, 2012). These set of people could be easily manipulated by influential people and peer groups to engage in violence.

Poor attitude of youths is also noteworthy. Some youths could not take up developmental initiatives themselves, but rather depend on readily made opportunities. A significant number of them are members of the ghettos, taking alcohol and drugs such as palm wine, marijuana and tranquilizers. It is observed that drugs and alcohol make young people more likely to result to violence and commit crimes, especially as they usually take drugs out of frustration (Restless Development, 2012). The government should expand its measures on improving human development index with priority to empowerment and living standard of youths by designing more working policies and strategies that concentrate not only on public sector but also the private sector to provide youth with space.

In addition, youth should equally take responsibility of being peaceful and developmentally oriented individuals. They should take advantage of whatever opportunities provided them. Finally, achieving sustainable development in Sierra Leone strongly depends on an elderly community which is determine to provide young people the opportunities to develop and take leadership roles and a viable youth population that is willing to listen, learn and determined to take the country forward.

Sierra Leone: The Future of a Nation Coming from Dust

By Amidu Kalokoh
Centre for Development
& Security Analysis
(Research Assistant)



Contact us:

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We demand that the responsible politicians here in Greece, with access to the resources of the EU, take immediate action:

We need you to replace the failed system of only being able to make asylum appointments to the Greek Asylum Office with a Skype call that is never picked up with a face-to-face service in the refugee camps here in Greece.

Because the longer we wait in this limbo, the more desperate people become. The more people will die or disappear with smugglers, or even commit suicide, and the more shame all of Europe should feel for leaving 50,000 of us here with no options besides a Skype call that is never picked up.

My name is Rania Ali and I am from Raqqa, Syria. I am 20 years old. I used to study business back in Syria but when ISIS took over our city my family had no choice but to leave. Because we are Kurdish as well we faced more trouble.

Now I am in Idomeni camp in Greece with my husband. Since the borders closed we have been living in a tent in the mud, rain and sun for over one and a half months. Life is becoming a normal hell, frustrations are rising as my husband and I lose hope.

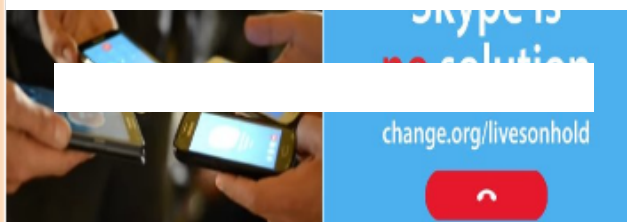
Refugees in Greece have only three options to continue their lives beyond camps: to apply for asylum in Greece, to apply for family reunification or for relocation to another country in the EU if they want us. And all three options can only begin with an appointment made by a Skype call, and only for one hour per week for some languages.

My husband and I want to apply for relocation to another country in Europe to escape from this situation. I have tried to call the Skype Asylum service for 20 days with no answer. For us refugees here in Greece, our lives are reduced to a routine of sleeping and waiting. Waiting in line for food, to go to the bathroom, to charge our phones, and waiting on hold for a Skype call that is never picked up. Our lives are stuck in limbo.

Waiting on-hold is frustrating, but when your life depends on the call?

For people living in camps with limited access to electricity, smart phones, computers, or internet, this is a cruel and senseless procedure. If it is our right to claim Asylum, then why are there such impossible barriers to do so?

If my husband and I can finally apply for relocation, we will still have to wait many months for decisions about our future to be made - a future that is no longer in our hands. But at the very least let us begin the wait now with some certainty - that we won't be stuck in camps in Greece forever.



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CITIZENS RIGHTS WATCH

Our values united become stronger...

Skype is
no solution

- we need face-
to-face services
for refugees in
Greece

Sign this petition

29,229 supporters
5,777 needed to reach 35,000

TOGO'S **SOCIAL** **CRISIS**

By Sara Benceković
 MSc in Social Anthropology at
 the University of Oxford.



Togo's history testifies of continuous shifts in West African political and economic organization, as a consequence of changing agents of power on the stage of global geopolitics. Foremost, Togo's territory has seen centuries-long immigration waves of various African tribes, which resulted in high diversity and cultural hybridization among the territory's population.

Starting with the 16th century slave trade, moreover, Togo has been introduced and subjected to the Euro-Otherness, under whose whip the country has been ever since. The colonial superpowers have been shifting in their control over the area after its initial status as a German colony, Togo has been overtaken by Britain and, later, France. Cold War politics have placed Togo in strategically important position for the Western allies, as Togo was the only pro-Western country in West Africa. Thus, Togo was enriched through the plentiful Western aid, which fuelled the longest dictatorship in Africa's history—the 38 years long Eyadéma's rule. The dictatorship, moreover, was not coincidentally West-supported regime when we look at the matter from the economic perspective as well.

As Piot writes, "Dictatorships are businesses' best friends" and Western countries, with France at the forefront, have long held interest in investing in Togo. The dictatorship allowed investment by manipulating local cultural meanings and, thus, eliminating cultural barriers to capitalist activity. Eyadéma's "politics of the belly," through which he supplied rural authorities, the chieftancy, with generous financial means in exchange for the villagers' political support, stands for one such example of capitalist politics manipulating local cultural signifiers for its own benefit. Eyadéma's death ended Togo's dictatorship era. What is, however, even more significant about the Eyadéma's death is that it signified a dramatic change in the imaginaries on place of Togo in the contemporary world. Indeed, the contemporary moment in Togolese history is marked by the startling personal and cultural rejection of the past, as well as the fanatical preoccupation with future. Proust provides a compelling remark, which potentially unravels the Togolese people's renunciation of the past, by saying, "Remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were". Indeed, although Togolese local has already been for centuries intertwined with the global, the newly emerging narratives, oftentimes, see Togolese culture as antithetical to modernity and development. In words of one Togolese pastor, "It is pagan beliefs that are the cause of Africa's poverty today". These beliefs distort the social memory by denying the reality of centuries-long colonial exploitation and corrupt regime, based on the alliance between the dictator and the Western powers, as factors that had an impact on the African economic and political devastation.

Tradition-blaming narratives and beliefs feed the collective fantasy of the better future, as well as the bold evacuation of everything familiar for the commitment to the uncertain and risky world to come. To exemplify, in 2004, out of six million Togolese in total, one million of them played the U.S. visa lottery, in a hope of acquiring a new life beyond Togo. This "quest for exile" not only changes lifestyles of the few winners, but modifies large aspects of the Togolese social. More specifically, as the U.S. formulates specific criteria applicants ought to satisfy in order to obtain the U.S. green card, Togolese subjects reconstitute themselves in regards to the U.S. guidelines.

Particular examples include the reconstitution of Togolese kinship, as applicants enter marriages with a goal of increasing their chances to obtain the visa, as well as the economic practices developed around the visa application process, such as forging marriage documents, photographs, or starting an apprenticeship in the professions desired by the US. Such disorientation of Togolese lives, moreover, results in erosion & misuse of traditional meanings & associations, what Lefebvre calls the "decline of referentials". For these practices to be accepted without resistance but with internalized joy, new instruments of power have appeared to subject & discipline the new Togolese citizen-subjects. Although the death of the dictator liberated Togolese from the national governance, they have now become subjected to the transnational governance & never more powerful, international agencies & institutions. Indeed, the post-Cold War years have seen the crumbling of the old Togolese authoritarian structures & the country's opening-up to new agents of power. The significance of this moment is in the end of the nation-state's mediation between the local & the global, & the subsequent reconstitution of the country's people as bearers of translocal identities. An example of such phenomenon is seen in the massive rejection of the local religious practices, & an impetus to enter the global community of Christ, by joining the world-wide present Pentecostal Church. What is more, the notions of "human rights," "democracy" & "choice" have come to resonate with people, as the once centralized state handed down the power to an autonomous individual. Indeed, neoliberalism horizontalizes the power; it scatters & diffuses the political among the people. This state of affairs Piot calls the "postnational" governmentality, as the governance occurs without the government. Subjects self-govern, but are also governed by variety of NGOs. NGOs act as a new source of biopolitics, as they dictate new sets of social, political & economic relations, new discourses & imaginaries, & new ways of navigating the social life. These institutions transform what means to be Togolese at this point in time. Unlike preceding international interventions, contemporary international institutions appeal to every individual, rather than merely those at the top of the hierarchy. As they represent private, non-national interests, their intervention targets some layers of population, yet not the others, according to agendas driven from far away. Indeed, the transnational non-governmental institutions decide whom they will help, & who will be left to the poverty & misfortune. These institutions also decide on the form of help, often immaterial aimed at cultural modernization of the populace. These actors claim to compensate for the gap left by the retreating state, thus doing work that once belonged under the state's jurisdiction, however, not only are they aiding the state, but colonizing its subjects. These conditions are the signifiers of Togo losing the control over its population—state structures disintegrate, services are contracted to private organizations, state presence subsist on a mere spectacle, whereas the enclosures & borders become porous to foreign agents. Indeed, these conditions suggest the disappearance of the state in the moment of globalization. It is an apocalyptic undoing of the Togolese social order, & citizens question viability of their futures. Togolese speak of violent & chaotic decay, the tragic prophecy of modernity & the affective nervousness of the current moment of the global in Togo.



Persistent **Resilience:** **The Ugandan** **LGBTI** **Community's** **Fight For Non-** **Discriminatory** **Healthcare**

By Austin Bryan
 Research Assistant at Sexual
 Minorities Uganda (SMUG)



As of July 2015, Uganda along with seventy one other countries and 5 sub-national jurisdictions have laws criminalizing homosexuality. This type of institutionalized homophobia not only effects social and economic issues by increasing unemployment rates, family banishment, harassment, and stigma; it also increases the HIV prevalence. Homophobic and transphobic laws which criminalize people's lives does not rid countries of LGBT persons, but instead pushes their communities further underground. This in turn makes it harder for health workers to access one of the populations most at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS. In Uganda the Crane Survey (2009), one of the only studies on MSM (men who have sex with men) and HIV/AIDS in the country, found that the overall HIV prevalence was 13.7% for men who have sex with men, nearly two times higher than the national prevalence rate of 7.3%. However, the rate was even higher among MSM greater than 25 years of age at 22.4%, when compared to MSM aged 18–24 years, who were at only 3.9%. The study also found that those who had been exposed to homophobic abuse (either verbally, sexually, or physically), were significantly more likely to be infected with the disease. For sexual and gender minorities with a "visible" sexual or gender identity, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse is often the highest. This is frequently the case for transgender persons, yet there has been little focus (if any) on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among transgender persons. Further, Uganda's HIV prevalence rate has been on the rise since 2005, unlike almost every other country in the world. Over the past five years Uganda's rate has increased from 6.4 to 7.3%. It is clear that continuing to discriminate against sexual and gender minorities will only make this figure increase. To ever eliminate HIV/AIDS, Uganda will have to reach some of the most at risk populations for contracting the disease, and that must include sexual and gender minorities. Recognizing sexual and gender minorities—especially MSMs—as a "key population" in HIV/AIDS programming alongside other subgroups, such as sex-workers, fisher-folk, migrant workers, etc. is critical to effectively combating the spread of the disease. Such groups have been identified internationally to need specific healthcare strategies and preventive measures to mitigate their risk of contracting HIV. Reducing their risk would subsequently reduce the wider societies' exposure to the virus. Possibly the best example of this are MSM who also engage in sex with women. These MSM, often pay for sex from sex-workers while also maintaining sexual relationships with heterosexual women (often within the construct of marriage). Therefore, decreasing the amount of unprotected sex among MSM would in turn decrease the HIV prevalence among women who engage in sex with MSM, either knowingly or unknowingly. Because of the social and political climate in Uganda there is often disruption of access to health services, including harassment by police at health facilities.

Perhaps the most notable case of this occurred when the Ugandan Police Force raided the Walter Reed Project, a project funded by the USAID, which offered services to all Ugandans with a specific focus on LGBTI individuals. Consequently, the US Embassy decided to shut down the project, and thirty of the clinic's HIV-positive clients, were evicted from their homes and were left (at least temporarily) without access to anti-retroviral medication.

When LGBTI persons seek services at health clinics and reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity they are often met with prejudice, bias, and discrimination by both the healthcare workers and peer clients. Discriminatory healthcare services are perhaps one of the most frequent human rights abuses against sexual and gender minorities in Uganda. However, the normalization of this discrimination makes the abuses difficult to track. Often when violations do occur, sexual and gender minorities fear reporting it because of the exposure they will receive in their community or family from seeking retributions could "out them" — a stake too high to risk. However, SMUG was able to document 264 cases of human rights abuses across the country toward Ugandan sexual and gender minorities.

It's ironic—to say the least—that the same arguments, stigma, and discrimination toward LGBT persons living with HIV were the same arrogance used to persecute people living with HIV in the beginning of the epidemic. While the Ugandan government has failed to adequately (or at all) address this growing problem, the world has watched African LGBT activists across the continent take matters into their own hands. In the context of Uganda, LGBT activists have created over 30 organizations across the country with the goal of contributing to civil society and fight for the human rights of LGBT persons. Many of these organizations, like Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), "Come Out Post Test Club", and Rainbow Health Foundation, operate with a focus on accessing non-discriminatory HIV services for sexual and gender minorities.

Further, LGBT activists have created workshops across the country to combat lack of awareness among health personnel. The health-care sensitizing campaigns combat stigma, and demystify the lives of sexual and gender minorities in a safe space. Although often starting out hostile and resistant the participants by the end of the workshop lead by sexual and gender minority activists leave with a better understanding of LGBT human rights. One activist told me:

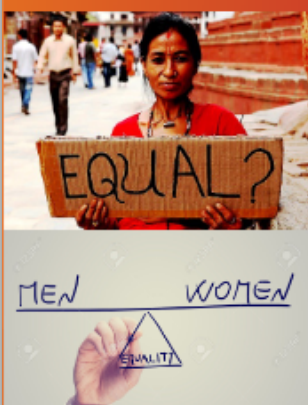
"We don't blame them when they ask you an offensive question," an LGBT activist from Kampala, Uganda told me. They are just uneducated. "So you are standing there — are you wearing pampers?" They will ask you that! But we just explain to them. They really want to know."

The work for LGBT human rights is challenging, dangerous, underfunded, and underfunded—but due to the hard work of local activists, against all odds the fight continues—and that is extremely important not to disregard.

Status of women

By Nazia Amin

BRAC University (LLB)
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The status of women in the society is a very important issue to discuss. Considering that women are often viewed as the weaker gender and are often mistreated, the importance of this issue is increasing day by day. Even though the status of women has improved over the years in many aspects (e.g. education etc.), there is still work to be done. Several laws and Acts have been passed in favor of women but those are not strongly enforced. Many reported cases and incidents of torture on women can be found in law reports and newspapers of various countries.

In the past, women were not allowed to move freely in the society. Girls from poor families were not permitted to go to school and receive education because their parents considered it a waste of money and in the end, their activities were mainly limited to household duties and nothing else.

Upper and middle class women used to receive some sort of education. Some did not continue study after the SSC exam, some got married after HSC exam and for others their husband or their in-laws did not agree to continue their studies. It was unusual for a woman to work in an office or any other places outside her home. Even though a woman was educated, she could not work. Instead her activities were limited to household duties. After some years, the things have been changed. The females started to be properly educated with support of families. The societies also started to accept women in various professions like doctor, engineer, lawyer, scientist, pilot and many more. Though women had educational and working opportunities, there was still problem in case of them. The problem was that they did not get rid of the pressure of household works. The working women were often ill treated by their husbands and in-laws because of irregularity in the household duties like proper cooking, serving everyone in the family, look after children etc.

For this reason, the number of professional/working women was very small. Some parents did not want their unmarried daughters to be involved in jobs because of fear of torture after marriage.

In the present period, there is no doubt that the women have many kinds of achievements. They can work side by side with men and earn money. They are not only well educated and rich women whose condition is like this but also the less educated women and women in village areas as there are too many posts or professions to get involved. Even the female students do part time jobs beside study. Women are participating in political activities. But still it cannot be said that the status of women is fully improved or in satisfactory condition. The violence and torture against women are not permanently removed from societies.

The number of violence is more than achievements. In a report of Human Rights Organization 'Odhikar', it is mentioned that in Bangladesh, 1,257 women are murdered, 348 are tortured, 243 women committed suicide for dowry, 526 women are victims of acid attack, 1,876 women are raped and almost 216 women are sexually harassed from the year 2005 to 2010. In the US, a woman is raped in every 6 minutes and a woman battered in every 1 seconds. In North Africa, 6,000 women are genitally mutilated each day. Women are sold into sexual slavery in China in a year and the number of such women is more than 15,000. In India, more than 7,000 women are murdered by their in-laws for failure to take dowries. Beside this, a girl is sexually harassed in every 26 minutes and a woman is raped in every 34 minutes in this country. All these information reflect that the safety of women is not properly ensured in the societies. Newspapers publish several news on rape and torture on women every year. The most highlighted news is the rape of a young girl during travelling by bus in India. A married woman got blind as a result of torture by her husband in Bangladesh. This news took place in many newspapers and magazines.

Various kinds of Acts, Conventions and organizations are available in support of tortured women. Some of them are Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Doman Ain, 2000 (in Bangladesh), Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2002 (in Bangladesh), Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association (BWLA), The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA), UN General Assembly and The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The picture of the societies of several countries proves that the Acts, Conventions and organizations are not successful in providing safe environment to females. Either these should be strongly enforced or should be amended/ratified. It is already discussed that women in modern period have all kinds of legal rights except safe environment. Protection of right to life and personal liberty is one of the fundamental rights of human being. So, the person who violates such right should get extreme punishment.

The institutions of law must come forward to improve the overall status of women. Women do not need any soft corner from society but need equal sense of honor to live.

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