

Tanzania: 10 men arrested in Zanzibar for being 'gay'

6 November 2018, 20:09 UTC

Ten men have been arrested on suspicion of being gay on the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar after police received a "tip-off" from members of the public about a same-sex marriage taking place, Amnesty International has revealed.

The arrests come after a prominent Tanzanian politician last week called on the public to report the names of suspected gay men to the police – comments subsequently denounced by the government.

This is a shocking blow following the Tanzanian government's assurance that no one would be targeted and arrested because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Seif Magango, Amnesty International Deputy Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes

"This is a shocking blow following the Tanzanian government's assurance that no one would be targeted and arrested because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity," said Seif Magango, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes.

"This appalling attack on Tanzanian people simply exercising their human rights shows the danger of inflammatory and discriminatory rhetoric at senior levels of government.

"We now fear these men may be subjected to forced anal examination, the government's method of choice for 'proving' same-sex sexual activity among men. This must not be allowed to happen - these men must be released immediately."

This appalling attack on Tanzanian people simply exercising their human rights shows the danger of inflammatory and discriminatory rhetoric at senior levels of government. Seif Magango, Amnesty International Deputy Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes

The 10 men were arrested when police raided a party at Pongwe Beach, Zanzibar on Saturday night (3 November). Six others at the event fled.

The 10 are being held at Chakwa police station in Unguja, despite no charges being brought against them.

Amnesty International has established that the men were arrested for allegedly conducting a gay marriage, with police saying they found the men sitting in pairs "two by two".

"It is mind-boggling that the mere act of sitting in a pair can assume criminal proportions. The police clearly have no grounds to file charges against these men in court, despite arresting them three days ago," said Seif Magango.

Background

On 29 October, Dar es Salaam's Regional Commissioner Paul Makonda announced plans to form a government taskforce to hunt down people believed to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI), due to begin its "work" on 5 November.

On Sunday 4 November, the Government of Tanzania, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, distanced itself from Makonda's remarks terming them "personal opinion".

Topics

- [Tanzania](#)
- [LGBTI Rights](#)
- [Discrimination](#)