

Ghana: Türk alarmed as parliament passes deeply harmful anti-gay bill

GENEVA (28 February 2024) – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk today said the passage in the Ghanaian Parliament of the so-called “Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, 2024” is profoundly disturbing.

“The bill broadens the scope of criminal sanctions against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transexual and queer people – simply for being who they are – and threatens criminal penalties against perceived allies of LGBTQ+ people,” said Türk.

“I call for the bill not to become law. I urge the Ghanaian Government to take steps to ensure everyone can live free from violence, stigma and discrimination, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Consensual same-sex conduct should never be criminalized.”

The High Commissioner also expressed deep alarm that the Bill criminalizes the legitimate work of human rights defenders, teachers, medical professionals, landlords, as well as people seeking healthcare, and unduly restricts freedom of association and expression of everyone in Ghana.

“The bill is contrary to Ghana’s own Constitution and freely-undertaken regional and international human rights obligations and commitments – including to leave no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” said the High Commissioner.

“Criminal sanctions for consensual same-sex conduct not only violate key international human rights norms and standards on equality, non-discrimination, privacy and equal protection of the law, among others – there is extensive evidence that they legitimize prejudice, expose people to hate crime, police abuse, harassment, intimidation, blackmail and torture. They also perpetuate discrimination and denial of access to basic services, including in healthcare, education and housing,” he added.

Türk stressed that the bill is corrosive and will have a negative impact on society as a whole.

He restated his Office’s commitment to work with the Government of Ghana and its national partners to ensure that Ghana fulfils its human rights commitments and obligations.