

Document #1455071

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mozambique: UN LGBT expert welcomes safe environment, but calls for social inclusion

MAPUTO (10 December 2018) – A UN expert recognised that Mozambique’s social fabric shields lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons from extreme forms of physical violence, but said the Government urgently needed to change its policy to end marginalisation and ensure full social inclusion.

At the end of his country visit, the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz noted that, being free from massive, systematic or flagrant physical violence against LGBT persons, Mozambique is an inspiring example.

“The Mozambican equation has been singularly successful because it has shielded LGBT people from the horrendous levels of physical violence that they face in other corners of the world,” he said in a [statement \(https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24002&LangID=E\)](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24002&LangID=E) at the end of his eight-day visit to Maputo and Nampula. “The other side of the coin, however, is that this social pact comes at a price that could be described as emotional captivity.

“It appears that a tacit social agreement exists not to attack homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals or gender diverse persons as long as they hide their true nature. This arrangement might be convenient for some sectors of society, but it is simply not acceptable under international human rights law, and it is not in the best interest of society.”

During his visit, he said LGBT people had provided many examples of invisible mechanisms of exclusion that have led to their marginalisation. “I am convinced that the problem lies in the State not yet having taken fully on board its responsibility to dispel some misconceptions around this topic, including the fact that homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality and gender diversity cannot be *promoted*. These are not lifestyles: they are inherent traits of human nature, and I believe that every Mozambican knows that.”

The expert met a wide range of stakeholders from Government and civil society, and many LGBT people shared with him life experiences and stories. One of them, a gay man, told Madrigal-Borloz: *“There is no widespread violence against us, but we are subjected to exclusion, poverty and psychological violence. The wounds of the soul do not heal, and they have a negative impact all life long.”*

The Independent Expert also met with leaders and community members of the Islamic faith in Nampula and the leaders of other religious denominations in Maputo, as well as with traditional healers in the north. “I am always encouraged to discuss with prominent religious and community leaders: while we can identify areas in which we disagree, I always find that we agree on the fact that violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are never justified and must be condemned and discouraged,” said Madrigal-Borloz.

The Independent Expert acknowledged the work of Mozambique’s leading LGBT organisation, Lambda: “Seldom in my career have I reported on a context in which a single organisation has taken it, entirely upon itself, to defend the lives and integrity of every LGBT person in a country of almost 30 million persons. I am convinced that through its work Lambda has saved many lives and furthered the cause of human rights. Every Mozambican, and the Mozambican State, owes a debt of gratitude to this most extraordinary organisation.”

ENDS

Mr. Victor Madrigal-Borloz (Costa Rica) assumed the role of UN Independent Expert on Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SexualOrientationGender/Pages/Index.aspx>) for a three years period starting on 1 January 2018. He serves as the Secretary-General of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT), a global network of over 150 rehabilitation centres with the vision of full enjoyment of the right to rehabilitation for all victims of torture and ill treatment. A member of the UN Subcommittee on the Prevention of Torture from 2013 to 2016, Mr Madrigal-Borloz was Rapporteur on Reprisals and oversaw a draft policy on the torture and ill-treatment of LGBTI persons. Prior to this he led technical work on numerous cases, reports and testimonies as Head of Litigation and Head of the Registry at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and has also worked at the Danish Institute for Human Rights (Copenhagen, Denmark) and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (San José, Costa Rica).

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UN Human Rights country page: Mozambique
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ecoi.net summary:

UN expert calls for better social inclusion of LGBTI persons



Country:

Mozambique

Source:

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
([/en/source/11534.html](https://www.ohchr.org/en/source/11534.html))

Original link:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24004&LangID=E> (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24004&LangID=E>)

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Published:

10 December 2018

Document ID:

1455071 (former ID [374605](https://www.ohchr.org/en/document/374605) ([/en/document/374605](https://www.ohchr.org/en/document/374605)))

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

