The U.S. Demanding Gay Rights Support at UN Body

March 24, 2011 By Angel Mason

(But first we've got to get our own house in order!)

According to Newsmax.com, The Obama administration will introduce its first statement calling for the United Nations' top human rights body to combat discrimination against gays and lesbians around the world, implementing a U.S. reversal from years of ambiguity on the subject during the presidency of George W. Bush.

The U.S. declaration will be made Tuesday at the Geneva-based Human Rights Council and has the support of more than 80 countries. Although it is not in the form of a binding resolution, the American push for U.N. action has helped win over a handful of new countries to the cause. A resolution could be brought to a vote later this year. The issue of gay rights has polarized nations at the U.N. for years. And despite growing acceptance of homosexuality in Western nations and parts of Latin America, lawyers and human rights activists say there is still a gap in human rights treaties for the protection of gays against discrimination and mistreatment.

"We are very concerned that individuals continue to be killed, arrested and harassed around the world because of their sexual orientation or gender identity," said Suzanne Nossel, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations. "This statement sends a strong message from across the globe that such abuses should not be tolerated." Again, I can only applaud the Obama administration for championing equal rights for all same-gender-loving people across the globe, especially in view of the recently proposed gay genocide in Uganda.

Just one year ago, on May 20, 2010 a gay couple in Malawi was sentenced by a judge to 14 years of hard labor, the maximum sentence, for committing what he felt were unnatural acts and gross indecency. The same judge found Steven Monjeza, 26, and Tiwonge Chimbalanga, 20, guilty of the crimes earlier that same week. The couple was arrested last December for simply holding a traditional engagement ceremony; and they have remained in prison since then for doing so. Judge Nyakwawa Usiwa-Usiwa reportedly told the men he wanted to "protect" the public from them. "I will give you a scaring sentence," (he pompously and unmercifully proclaimed) "so that the public will be protected from people like you! And so that we are not tempted to emulate this horrendous example!" The couple, with the help of local and international human rights groups, is expected to appeal, though up until now this has not yet been done. This would definitely be in the best interest of the defendants since their 14-year prison sentence will most likely result in their untimely demise at the hands violent and homophobic

incarcerated murderers. The case has also drawn international condemnation of the aforementioned anti-homosexuality laws in Malawi, and been denounced by 65 members of the British Parliament who signed a motion condemning the prosecution. In addition, the international human rights group Amnesty International adopted the couple as prisoners of conscience.

Not long after the imprisonment of the Malawi gay couple, David Kato, one of Uganda's most prominent gay rights activists was murdered in his home weeks after winning a court victory over a tabloid that called for homosexuals in Uganda to be killed. David Kato, the advocacy officer for Sexual Minorities Uganda, was bludgeoned to death in Mukono, Kampala. Along with other Ugandan gay activists, Kato had reported increased harassment since January 3rd, when a high court judge granted a permanent injunction against the Rolling Stone tabloid newspaper, preventing it from identifying homosexuals in its pages.

All of these horrific events are particularly troubling since many countries who supported Uganda and surrounding African nations monetarily are now withdrawing AIDS funding. This is crippling the country in terms of offering quality treatment to the millions of individuals suffering from the pandemic in those areas. AIDS-related stigma and discrimination directed at same gender-loving-people and people living with HIV and AIDS, results in being shunned by family, peers and the wider community; discouraging those infected with the virus from seeking proper treatment because of the fear of being labeled gay and/or the possibility of eventually being killed because of it. It is a proven fact that poor treatment in healthcare and education results in an erosion of rights and psychological damage that often negatively affects the success of testing and treatment.

Uganda and other surrounding countries inhumane acts of violence and overt discrimination directed at same-gender-loving people has blinded them to truth and compassion which subsequently has clouded their good judgment and sense of self-preservation. It now also threatens to undo 30 years of progress made against the spread of the virus. Already we are seeing signs of these repercussions, since thousands refuse to seek medical care, fearing that doctors, nurses and practitioners will disclose their sexual preference--something mandated by the Ugandan Legislation. The daunting reality is that now millions will die needlessly because of fear, ignorance and intolerance.

While it is easy to point a finger at other countries such as Uganda and condemn them for their monstrous acts against humanity, we must also realize that "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." Even though we pride ourselves on living in a democracy and we pompously declare to the world on frequent occasions that we are the ultimate example of a democratic country, we are also hypocrites! America has allowed bigots and religious extremists for years to enshrine in our own constitution countless laws that illegally deny same-gender-loving people equal rights, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (in almost every state). Many religious leaders and right-wing politicians justify their actions biblically and feel absolutely no remorse for their actions. Yes, it is commendable that we are leading the way in the international community in regards to proposing this resolution. Still, it is vital and imperative that we first remove the two-by-four from our own eye before we attempt to remove the splinter from our brother's eye!

After this resolution is proposed next Tuesday, our goal as a nation should be to immediately return to our own country (with the winds of equality and integrity at our backs) determined to uproot any and everything that is enshrined in our constitution, on any level of government, that denies any human being equal rights. It is an immutable law that it is far better to lead by example because we are practicing what we preach, than to shout from the rafters of hypocritical self-deception. We must put an

end to demanding equality and fair treatment of all of people from the international community, while we ourselves are living in hypocrisy and even committing many of the same injustices! What we demand of them, we must demand more of--from ourselves. Then, and only then, will we become a true beacon of light, love and hope that others will be eager to follow!

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