

IACHR Condemns Recent Wave of Violence against LGBTI Persons in Haiti
By IACHR
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PRESS RELEASE

Washington, D.C. – The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) condemns the recent wave of violence against lesbians, gays, trans, bisexual e intersex persons (LGTBI) in Haiti, allegedly linked to a march against homosexuality led by the Haitian Coalition of Religious and Moral Organizations (Coalition Haïtienne des organisations religieuses et morales) that took place on July 19, 2013 in Port-au-Prince. The Commission urges the Haitian government to investigate and take urgent and effective measures to stop these acts of violence and discrimination.

According to the information received by the IACHR, between July 17 and 24, there have been 47 cases of violence and aggression against LGBTI persons or perceived as such, including attacks with knives, machetes, cement blocks, rocks, and sticks. According to the information received, some LGBTI persons or persons perceived as such have received death threats, and their houses have been burned down or looted.

The Commission welcomes the statement issued jointly on July 21, 2013 by the President, Michel Martelly, and the Prime Minister, Laurent Lamothe, denouncing the events, calling the general population to show greater tolerance, and reaffirming that tolerance is a virtue necessary for the establishment of a just and democratic society. The Commission applauds State statements of this kind; notwithstanding, according to the information received by the IACHR, the general population is not aware of it. It is imperative that Haiti also adopt effective measures to prevent the repetition of these types of acts of violence and discrimination in the future.

The Commission reiterates that the State has the duty to respond to these human rights violations and guarantee that LGBTI persons may effectively exercise their right to a life free of discrimination and violence, including the adoption of public policies and campaigns. In this regard, the Commission reiterates that the ineffectiveness in the State response fosters impunity, which in turn fosters the chronic repetition of these crimes, leaving the victims and their families defenseless. Moreover, impunity for these crimes sends a general message to society that this violence is tolerated.

As part of its work monitoring the situation of human rights of LGBTI persons in Haiti, the Commission held a hearing during the 141st session, in March 2011. At that hearing, the Commission received troubling information regarding the high levels of violence and discrimination against LGBTI individuals in Haiti, and the belief of sectors of Haitian society that homosexuality is responsible for the earthquake that hit that country in 2010, among other problems.

A principal, autonomous body of the Organization of American States (OAS), the IACHR derives its mandate from the OAS Charter and the American Convention on Human Rights. The Inter-American Commission has a mandate to promote respect for human rights in the region and acts as a consultative body to the OAS in this area. The Commission is composed of seven independent members who are elected in an individual capacity by the OAS General Assembly and who do not represent their countries of origin or residence.