

**Zimbabwe LGBTs fear constitution change after Mugabe 'behead the gays' threat
Zimbabwe's Zanu PF predicted to toughen anti-gay laws with President Mugabe threatening 'hell for gays' and LGBTs saying violence is getting worse**
By [MILES TANHIRA](#), [TRIS REID-SMITH](#)
13 August 2013

LGBT people in Zimbabwe are warning President Robert Mugabe may change the constitution to further criminalize gay people.

The new constitution, overwhelmingly backed in a March 2013 referendum, already states: 'Persons of the same sex are prohibited from marrying each other.'

But now Mugabe has won the election his Zanu PF party has the power and desire to make more changes.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Zimbabweans are even more worried because of the dictator's threat during his election campaign to deliver 'hell for gays' and [even to behead them](#).

The new constitution took four years to build amid political haggling between Zanu PF and main opposition party Movement for Democratic Change.



Now Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa, a leading Mugabe advisor, [said](#) the document will need a 'cleaning up'.

'The ruling party will also make minor changes to the Constitution having won the two-thirds legislative majority it needs to do so,' [Chinamasa said](#).

The idea of the constitution being amended has once again evoked fear and uncertainty among LGBT people, who are concerned that ZANU PF may tighten laws on homosexuality.

Homosexuality is already illegal in Zimbabwe. Unlike in other former colonies which just criminalize gay anal sex, the law has been toughened to make it an offense for people of the same sex to hug, kiss or even just hold hands.

And laws against 'indecent' publications have been used to harass LGBT people and activists.

Now they fear Zanu PF will add an extra clause to the part of the constitution that bans gay and lesbian marriage.

During negotiations, Zanu PF wished to add a section prohibiting all homosexual 'practices'. Although this didn't make it into the final draft, it could now be reinserted.

GSN gained reactions from a range of LGBT Zimbabweans and has disguised their names for their safety.

PM, an LGBT activist, told us: 'If Zanu PF wants to be seen to keep its promises and they are going to amend the constitution, there is a possibility they will not leave the issue of homosexuality as is. They will probably add the clause that was initially rejected.'

CG, a human rights activist in Harare, warned this would be likely to have popular support, saying: 'If you look at the many things Zanu PF promised to fix, they will probably start with those that do not require any monetary costs.'

'If they start amending constitution it would be surprising if they didn't add something to the topic of same sex relationships. This topic does not have numerical advantage and not many people will be concerned really, if anything they will be happy and Zanu PF appears as the messiah once again.'

An LGBT rights activist in Bulawayo agreed, saying: 'Zanu PF is a populist party, many people condemn homosexuality and the party knows it.'

'Let's wait and see how it goes, we cannot speculate, but right now it seems inevitable that the issue of homosexuality is political and will be used to get support as usual.'

The National Statistical Report, garnering the views of the people during the constitutional reform process, showed 76% of Zimbabweans agree homosexuality should be outlawed.

TT a lesbian in Harare told us: 'It's scary to even imagine of what may happen, we just hope this is just talk. If laws are harsh, it also fuels violence against us at all levels from police to families.'

While GK, a gay man in Harare, said: 'We are experiencing threats of violence and if laws should be made stiffer that's terrible.'

And LB, a lesbian in Harare, appealed for human rights organizations to stand up to Mugabe's party now before the situation gets worse for everyone.

She told us: 'Zanu PF used the issue during campaigns, now they are about fulfilling the electorate's wishes. They will start with targeting minority groups like us in order to get majority support.'

'Human rights defenders should make noise, this is how oppression of everyone starts.'

LGBT people in Zimbabwe have already [reported worsening violence and harassment in the country](#).

[Mugabe's victory this month came amid widespread claims of electoral fraud and intimidation](#).