

Ugandan group sues anti-gay pastor in US

Sexual Minorities Uganda says Scott Lively promoted violence against gay people there, contravening international law

David Smith in Johannesburg
guardian.co.uk, Thursday 15 March 2012 10.19 EDT

[A larger](#) | [smaller](#)

[Article history](#)



Demonstrators carry a mock coffin calling attention to the story of murdered Ugandan gay rights leader David Kato during a protest in Springfield, Massachusetts. Photograph: Don Treeger/AP

A Ugandan [gay rights](#) group is suing an American Christian evangelist it accuses of waging a campaign of homophobia in the east African country.

[Sexual Minorities Uganda](#) filed the lawsuit against minister Scott Lively on Wednesday in Springfield, Massachusetts, under a statute that the group says allows non-citizens to launch US court actions for violations of international law.

Frank Mugisha, who heads the pressure group, said it was targeting Lively for "helping spread propaganda and violence" against gay people in [Uganda](#).

"We hope that he will be held accountable for what he did in Uganda," Mugisha, who won the Robert F Kennedy human rights award last year, was quoted as saying by the Associated Press. "We want to send out a clear message to him and to others."

The complaint claims Lively issued a call in Uganda to fight against a "genocidal" and "paedophilic" gay movement which he "likened to the Nazis and Rwandan murderers". It seeks a judgment that Lively's actions violate international law and human rights.

Lively, of [Abiding Truth Ministries](#), is one of [three American pastors who visited Uganda in 2009](#) and whom gay activists accuse of helping draft the original version of its anti-homosexuality bill. [Lively denies this](#).

The bill demanded the death penalty for certain homosexual acts such as gay people with Aids having sex. It has since been revamped to replace the death penalty with life imprisonment as a maximum sentence.

A 2009 [video posted on YouTube shows Lively addressing a Ugandan audience](#), offering a theory of "the three causes of homosexuality" and insisting "you can overcome it".

Lively has written books including *The Pink Swastika: Homosexuality in the Nazi Party*, which suggests that Nazism has roots in homosexuality, and *Seven Steps to Recruit-Proof Your Child: A Parent's Guide to Protecting Children from Homosexuality and the "Gay" Movement*.

On Wednesday Lively described the legal action as absurd and frivolous. He said in an email to AP that he had never advocated violence against gay people. He said he had preached against homosexuality but advised therapy, not punishment.

Lively claimed his words had been taken out of context. "Most of the ostensibly inflammatory comments attributed to me are from selectively edited video clips of my 2009 seminars in Kampala," he said. "I challenge the plaintiffs and their allies to publish the complete footage of the seminar on the internet. They will not do this or their duplicity would be exposed."

Lively also told AP in November that he advised the Ugandan parliament to focus on rehabilitation and not punishment. He said he did not oppose the criminalisation of homosexuality but said imprisonment and the death penalty are too harsh.

About 70 protesters marched half a mile from the US district court in Springfield to Lively's business, the Holy Grounds coffee house. They dressed in black and beat drums, carrying signs with the names of persecuted Ugandans and coffins to symbolise death allegedly due to persecution. The group spent about 10 minutes in front of the coffee house, leaving white flowers there.

The New York-based Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR) group filed the suit on behalf of Sexual Minorities Uganda. CCR lawyer Pam Spees said it also sought monetary damages.

The suit against Lively, whose Springfield church is known as Redemption Gate Mission Society, is part of wide-ranging legal action Ugandan gay groups are considering against individuals they consider hostile to the rights of gay people.

© 2012 Guardian News and Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved.

;