MSM Criminalization Hinders AIDS Efforts in Burundi

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Burundian AIDS activists and international human rights groups are concerned that a new law that criminalizes homosexuality in the central African country will inhibit their prevention efforts and promote HIV stigma, IRIN/PlusNews reports.

“We regret that the law will hamper Burundi’s attempts to fight AIDS by further marginalizing an at-risk population,” said a joint statement by international rights groups, including the New York–based Human Rights Watch, local human rights organization Ligue Iteka and a Burundian AIDS advocacy group called Association Nationale de Soutien aux séropositifs et Malades du Sida (ANSS). “We urge the government of Burundi to act promptly to decriminalize homosexual conduct.”

According to the article, men who have sex with men (MSM) can face two to three years in prison and a fine of up to $84. Though the majority of the country’s senate voted against the draft bill in February, the decision was reversed by the lower house of parliament in March and signed into a law April 22 by President Pierre Nkurunziza.

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