Jamaican Prime Minister Will Not Decriminalize Homosexuality

March 6, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

Bruce Golding, the Jamaican prime minister, told his parliament recently that the country will not decriminalize homosexual acts, Pink News reports. He said he has a duty to “protect” the country.

“We are not going to yield to the pressure, whether that pressure comes from individual organizations, individuals, whether that pressure comes from foreign governments or groups of countries, to liberalize the laws as it relates to buggery,” Golding said.

Gareth Thomas, minister of state at the U.K. Department for International Development, told Pink News that confronting homophobia in the Caribbean is crucial in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the region. “Things are not getting better,” he said.

It’s sad that the country of peaceful reggae music is now known as the country of homophobic dance hall music. The homophobia is so rampant that LGBT activists are routinely harassed and even murdered.

Jamaica is certainly not alone in its homophobia. The Caribbean in general is not overly LGBT-friendly, but tolerance does exist here and there. If Cuba--infamous for its homophobia--can make significant strides toward LGBT tolerance, then Jamaica can, too.

There is no doubt that homophobia fuels the spread of HIV. Tackling homophobia is not only a civil rights issue, it’s a health issue.

Tip of the hat for this story to the LGBT blog Pam’s House Blend.

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