



Gay Men in Jamaica Attacked by Mob

By GayWebMonkey.com

Jamaican government does little in response

Last week, in the Jamaican town of Mandeville, three gay men were attacked in their home by an angry mob of approximately 20 people who had threatened them with violence days before if they did not leave the community.

After the incident, two of the attacked men were hospitalized, one with serious injuries including a severed ear, an arm broken in two places and a damaged spine, while another man is still missing and feared dead. This is only the latest in a wave of attacks on gay men in notoriously homophobic Jamaica.

According to a Human Rights Watch press release, the attack on these men echoes another incident in the same town on Easter Sunday, April 8, 2007 when approximately 100 men gathered outside a church where 150 people were attending the funeral of a gay man.

According to mourners, the crowd broke the windows with bottles and shouted, "We want no battyman [gay] funeral here. Leave or else we're going to kill you. We don't want no battyman buried here in Mandeville."

Several mourners inside the church called the police to request protection. After half an hour, three police officers arrived but did little to calm situation, opting instead to commiserate and laugh with the menacing mob until several gay men among the mourners took knives from their cars for self-defense.

2007 also saw a crowd of about 2,000 Jamaican citizens, including teens and small children, stone three gay men. Meanwhile back in April 2006, students rioted at the University of the West Indies and attacked an alleged gay student, while in December 2005, a Kingston mob chased an alleged gay man who, fearful of the crowd, jumped into the water and drowned. In response to the ongoing series of violent attacks, the Jamaican government is being pressured to tackle mob violence against gay people in the country.

GayNZ.com reported that the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians All-Sexuals and Gays (JFLAG) is urging the Jamaican government to action.

"This has become a blot on Jamaica's human rights record," said a JFLAG spokesperson.

"No modern democracy can afford to revert to jungle justice. We must give real meaning to the rule of law through our constituted authorities and institutions."

In 2007, Human Rights Watch wrote to then-Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller and Peter Phillips, minister of national security, calling for an investigation into all the reported violence, as well as protection of witnesses from threats or reprisals. Human Rights Watch has reportedly received no response from the government to any of this correspondence, further fueling the widely held belief that widespread and all too common mob violence against gay men is condoned by the Jamaican government and police authorities.

"While Jamaican police have begun to reach out to gay and lesbian communities, this change hasn't reached many police stations, where protection remains an illusion," Rebecca Schleifer, HIV/AIDS advocate at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement to the Associated Press.

Jamaica has a colonial-era law on the books that bans sex between men.

Written By Duane Wells