



Marion House
Kingstown - St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Email: vincychapsvg101@gmail.com

For immediate release

Colonial-era laws that discriminate against LGBT people ‘have no place in our lawbooks’, says Saint Vincent HIV/AIDS organisation

(Kingstown, Oct 11, 2019) Laws that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are relics of the colonial era and should be struck off the law-books in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, says a local organisation working to reduce HIV infection rates in the country.

Section 146 and 148 of the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Criminal Code are discriminatory laws used to target LGBT people. Punishment for breaking these laws is up to ten years imprisonment.

Two gay men, exiled from their country, have filed cases at the High Court of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, challenging the constitutionality of these laws.

‘The current legal challenge was not brought by VincyCHAP, and we were not made aware of it before it was filed. However, we firmly believe that these outdated laws have no place in our lawbooks, and would welcome them being confined to history, whether through the courts or via parliamentary reform,’ said spokesperson from the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Chapter of the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Partnership (VincyCHAP).

After Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean region has some of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS infection in the world. According to UN AIDS, around 1200 people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are currently living with HIV.

Even though there have been no recent arrests under the anti-gay laws, the criminalisation of LGBT people creates an environment of shame, stigma and violence, which in turn hinders the availability, access and uptake of HIV prevention, testing and treatment services, thus increasing transmission, says VincyChap.

Because of this clear link, multiple international organisations have called for the decriminalisation of homosexuality on public health grounds alone.

Regionally, ECADE, an alliance of eastern Caribbean organisations that works with VincyCHAP to reduce stigma and discrimination against marginalised groups, notes the merit of the action. “Our experience in the region shows such action can raise public emotion and we continue to support VincyCHAP to ensure the safety and security of Vincentians in the short and long term,” said Executive Director Kenita Placide.

VincyChap is witness to the devastating impact these discriminatory laws have on LGBT St Vincentians. There are several recent recorded incidents of young Vincentians being assaulted verbally and physically and denied protection due to their perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

‘LGBT St Vincentians are ordinary citizens. They are doctors, farmers, shopkeepers and taxi drivers. They are our sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, parents and grandparents, whose rights are recognised by our Constitution, the supreme law of our land, no matter who they love. It’s high time the Courts strike down these archaic laws for good,’ adds VincyCHAP.

———— ENDS ———-

VincyCHAP is a legally registered non-governmental organisation, founded in 2007 that provides HIV education, counselling and testing in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. VincyCHAP online: <https://www.instagram.com/vinchap101/>

- [Further resources on stigma, discrimination and violence facing LGBTI people](#)

For more information and to schedule interviews, please contact:

Local: Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Chapter of the Caribbean HIV/AIDS Partnership

Email: vinchapsvg101@gmail.com

Telephone: +1 784 495-5570

Regional: Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc (ECADE)

Email: info@eequality.org

Phone: +1 758 450 9498 / +1 758 714 1765