



Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality

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For immediate release

## Regional human rights groups say LGBT Vincentians living in fear urge a focus on real social ills following protests

(Castries, December 4, 2019) The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE), is urging a focus on real social ills in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The regional human rights organisation works with local partner VincyCHAP to address laws and policies that discriminate against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Vincentians.

VincyCHAP and ECADE says there is heightened fear among LGBTQ Vincentians, who have reported a recent increase in verbal and physical attacks, particularly in Kingstown.

ECADE's Executive Director Kenita Placide notes, "Since the challenge to Sections 146 and 148 of the SVG Criminal Code was announced, we have seen an uprising in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that we have not seen even after horrendous assaults on innocent children and women or unprovoked attacks on citizens because of their sexuality. These are crimes against which their should be constant and loud outcry."

Placide notes that the focus should always be on the responsibility to protect citizens from harm and preserve public order. Following religious protests in the capital, LGBT Vincentians have reported at least four unprovoked attacks to VincyCHAP and ECADE.

"The Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines undertakes to respect, protect and promote the rights of **all** its citizens and Section 146 and 148 clearly go against the rights enshrined in the Constitution," says Placide. "How can there be any objection to requesting that the State safeguard those facing discrimination and violence because of outdated and unjust laws?" Placide asks.

Section 146 and 148 are discriminatory laws used to target LGBT people. Punishment for breaking these laws is up to 10 years imprisonment. Both apply to men and women. Two gay men, exiled from their homes in Saint Vincent, filed cases at the High Court of SVG, challenging the constitutionality of these laws in July. In November the court ruled that ten churches, under the banner of the Christian Coalition, can join the Government in responding to the challenge. VincyCHAP and ECADE are not party to this particular litigation.

While noting that this is a constitutional and not a religious matter, ECADE still reminds the public of the exhortation by current head of the Roman Catholic, Pope Francis, who famously said regarding LGBT people, “Who am I to judge?...The key is for the church to welcome, not exclude and show mercy, not condemnation.”

— ENDS —

The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc. (ECADE )is an independent umbrella organisation, representing the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Its membership consists of 26 organisations and is drawn from nine small island territories in the eastern Caribbean, including Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Learn more at [www.ecequality.org](http://www.ecequality.org) or email [info@ecequality.org](mailto:info@ecequality.org).

VincyCHAP is a legally registered non-governmental organisation, founded in 2007 that provides HIV education, counselling and testing in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

For more information or to arrange interviews, contact:

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#### **About ECADE**

The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc. (ECADE) is a network of organisations working across the eastern Caribbean. Drawing on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law”, ECADE works to increase the competence of activists and conscientise the people of the eastern Caribbean for the advancement of LGBTQI and marginalised populations in the region. Learn more at [www.ecequality.org](http://www.ecequality.org) or email [info@ecequality.org](mailto:info@ecequality.org).

**VincyCHAP** Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is a member organisation of the ECADE network.

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