

**PRESS STATEMENT: Embargoed until 10 AM East Africa Time Monday December 10 2012**

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**On International Human Rights Day and “Black Monday,” Ugandan civil society launches call for urgent investigation by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health into the health threats posed by Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill**

**(Kampala)** CEHURD (the Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development) together with 97 national, regional and global civil society organizations working on health and human rights (the majority Ugandan) today filed an “Urgent Appeal” to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, Mr. Anand Grover, requesting that his office launch a formal investigation into the health threats posed by Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill. The urgent appeal will be available for download at [www.cehurd.org](http://www.cehurd.org) from 10:00 AM East Africa Time on Monday 10 December 2012.

“We are gravely concerned that this bill, if passed, would do grievous harm to the health of all Ugandans,” said Moses Mulumba, CEHURD’s Executive Director. “In the case of HIV, other countries have sought out vulnerable populations with services and support and are reporting declining rates of new HIV infections. But Uganda’s HIV incidence is rising—and we believe our harmful legal and policy environment is a contributing factor to the deteriorating HIV response.” A recent study in Uganda showed that rates of HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Kampala are about twice the national average of 7.3%, and MSM who have experienced verbal or physical homophobic abuse are 5 times more likely to be HIV positive than MSM who have not experienced such abuse.

The urgent appeal argues that the Anti-Homosexuality Bill will have a disastrous impact on access to essential health services as well as to accurate public health information and would drive lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities further underground—out of fear of massive recrimination and further criminalization. Even discussing the health rights of LGBTI persons would be considered “promotion of homosexuality” and would be criminalized. Professional health workers and counselors would be forced to violate their basic ethical obligations not to discriminate against patients and not to break confidentiality—if information was passed to them about a patient being an LGBTI person.

The organizations noted that the urgent appeal, which was filed on International Human Rights Day, is also linked with Uganda’s “Black Monday” Campaign—a grassroots campaign against the massive theft of public funds in Uganda.

“It appears that the Anti-Homosexuality Bill is being used to try to distract from massive government corruption scandals in the Ministry of Public Service, the Office of the Prime Minister, and elsewhere,” said Alice Kayongo of the Community Health Alliance Uganda (formerly known as the International HIV/AIDS Alliance Uganda). “The Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament says she would like to deliver this Bill as a ‘Christmas present’ to Ugandans—but we want a real Christmas present: a Parliament that tackles massive theft of public funds, rather than scapegoating marginalized populations with a harmful bill that would undermine public health and human rights.” The UK, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the European Union, the World Bank, Austria, and Belgium have suspended hundreds of billions of shillings in budget support to Uganda, including funding being used for essential health programs by the Ministry of Health, in response to recent corruption scandals.

“We believe, if passed, the Anti Homosexuality Bill would be a disaster for public health in Uganda,” said Clare Byarugaba, Co-Coordinator of the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law. “Furthermore, we believe efforts to push this Bill are a strong indicator of Uganda’s continued decline in fulfilling its human rights commitments to the people of Uganda.”