

Nigerian Humanist Movement opposes government move to ban same-sex marriages

The [Nigerian Humanist Movement](#) has condemned a recent move by the Nigerian government to ban same-sex marriages. On January 18, 2006, the Federal Executive Council approved a bill that prohibits same-sex marriages and relationships. The bill provides for a prison term of up to five years without the option of a fine for anyone who contracts marriage or has a relationship with a person of the same sex, and for anyone who aids or supports in any way a same-sex marriage or relationship.

Nigeria's Justice Minister Bayo Ojo explains his position, saying that same-sex marriage is "unAfrican and prohibited in the Bible and the Koran."

On the contrary, homosexuality is not unAfrican. Homosexual practice has been going on in Africa for ages. What is really unAfrican is homophobia, not homosexuality. The anti-homosexual attitude is largely based on the Bible and the Koran. Hence, the Church, along with Islamic groups in Africa, has been vehemently opposed to any attempt to recognize the humanity and [human rights](#) of gays and lesbians.

It is unfortunate that the debate over gay rights in Nigeria has been marked by a lot of ignorance, prejudice, holy hatred, dogma and religious fanaticism.

The Nigerian Humanist Movement calls for reason, common sense, thoughtfulness, knowledge, love, tolerance, human solidarity, and empathy in all national endeavors. We urge President Obasanjo not to copy the US President George W. Bush, who wants to change the American constitution to make gay marriage unlawful. Nigeria should instead emulate South Africa and make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal.

Nigeria should honor its commitments as a signatory to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights documents. The Nigerian Humanist Movement is therefore appealing to the honorable members of the National Assembly to reject the bill banning same sex marriage.

Nigeria is a better, freer, more progressive and more democratic nation without this bill.

Leo Igwe

Executive Secretary

Nigerian Humanist Movement