



***For immediate release:

The Refugee Coalition of East Africa Statement on Human Rights Day

NAIROBI, KENYA - December 10th has been declared by the United Nations as Human Rights Day. **The Refugee Coalition of East Africa**, an umbrella organization established to unite the various independent LGBTQI refugee organizations in East Africa, is a registered community organization in Kenya. As such, RefCEA offers the following **statement**:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." - The United Nations

We, the Refugee Coalition of East Africa, believe wholeheartedly in this statement. We are also aware that those rights, that freedom, and the state of being born in dignity are factors that are taken away for so many refugees, and for LGBTQI refugees, even more so. We encourage the United Nations, the citizens of host nations, and the world at large to greater consider the plight of the LGBTQI refugee and the lack of basic human rights we are so often afforded. In East Africa, we face a plethora of prejudice that chips away, daily, at each of our human rights and that threatens our ability to live a dignified life. From violence and hate-speech to housing and employment discrimination, we are so often *not* living with our basic rights.

Today is a day to reflect on the rights of all people, universally. It is a day on which we should acknowledge those humans not offered the rights they should inherently have. December 10th of 2018 marks the 70 year anniversary of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but the world today does not observe that declaration for so many.

LGBTQI refugees are a small subset of a massive worldwide refugee population, and as such we often go unnoticed. Our cries of protest at the regular violations of our rights frequently remain unheard. We do not have representation in so many of the communities, organizations, and governing bodies that should exist to include our protection. From the notorious "Kill the Gays" bill in Uganda in 2014 to the rounding up of LGBTQI citizens in Tanzania in 2018, the homophobic violence in East Africa is ongoing. We have fled in fear, only to find crippling circumstances and insurmountable financial barriers in our new homes, waiting years to be resettled to a country where we can live, work, and be ourselves. We are still waiting.

On this day, the Coalition encourages all those observing the Declaration to further consider LGBTQI refugees around the world, and particularly those of us in regions where our existence, let alone our rights, are threatened. We are trying to live, to work, to love, to survive, and to thrive as are all human beings. For us, the threats and obstacle to these desires are a normalized part of our existence. Our rights are rarely acknowledged.

The Refugee Coalition of East Africa exists because of exactly this prevalence of homophobia and prejudice in the region and around the world. On this day, Human Rights Day, we ask for your notice, your love, your acknowledgement, and your support.

In solidarity,
The RefCEA Secretariat

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The Refugee Coalition of East Africa (RefCEA) is a registered community organization for and by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. RefCEA was established to unite the various independent LGBTQI refugee organizations in East Africa under an umbrella organization in order to facilitate long-term planning, advocacy, and representation, and to provide fiscal management and fundraising support for its members. Additionally, RefCEA oversees research initiatives representing the LGBTQI refugee community and works toward improving conditions for refugees during the resettlement waiting period. Current membership consists of: Community Support Initiative for Refugees, Natures Network, Refugee Flag Kakuma, Urban Legacy Africa, and Arise Network Africa.

www.refugeecoalition.com