



UNHCR must act now and provide emergency support to injured LGBTQ+ refugees at Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya

March 15, 2021. JASS (Just Associates) Southern Africa and the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) condemn the ongoing targeted brutal attacks on LGBTQ+ refugees in Kakuma Block 13.

In the early hours of March 15, two 'houses' occupied by LGBTQ+ human rights defenders were torched in Kakuma Block 13, leaving Ayesigye Jordan and Atuhwera Chriton with 2nd-degree burns. The police and medical personnel have been slow to respond to the emergency calls. Jordan and Trinidad need to be airlifted immediately to a hospital in Nairobi to get medical attention.

This incident is the latest in a long list of vicious attacks against LGBTQ+ refugees at Kakuma Block 13. LGBTQ+ refugees are unsafe and experience different forms of physical and sexual violence on a daily basis; from beatings and torchings, to slashing and rape. The slow response by the police and other authorities normalizes and perpetuates the violence, vulnerabilities, and indignity experienced by LGBTQ+ refugees.

Despite years of urging by organizations to act and protect LGBTQ+ refugees at the Kakuma camp, the UNHCR has shown little political will and commitment to intervene. This is in direct violation of UNHCR's mandate to *"aid and protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people, and to assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country."*

JASS Southern Africa and the Coalition of African Lesbians, stands with LGBTQ+ survivors in their demands for the following:

1. The UNHCR must airlift the two severely burned victims from last night's homophobic attack on Block 13 to Nairobi for treatment today, Monday, March 15th.
2. The UNHCR must transfer the entire LGBTQ+ Block 13 Group at risk to the transit centre today, Monday, March 15th, and immediately provide them with highly accountable 24/7 security as urgent evacuation plans are being put in place.
3. The UNHCR must evacuate the LGBTQ+ Block 13 Group at risk from Kakuma to Nairobi by Thursday, March 18th, and expedite their resettlement as they are survivors of intensive and unending homophobic attacks.

4. The Kenyan government and all its institutions has a duty to protect **everyone** within their borders regardless of their citizenship status. Protecting refugees is the primary responsibility of the State.
5. We call on all our allies and partners, human rights organisations and defenders to share this statement / issue yours and stand in unequivocal solidarity with the community in Block 13.

For further information, please contact:

Phumi Mtetwa
Regional Director
JASS Southern Africa
southernafrica@justassociates.org
www.justassociates.org

Gathoni Blessol
Director of Programmes
Coalition of African Lesbians
info@cal.org.za
www.cal.org.za