

# DAVID KATO

b. February 13, 1964

d. January 26, 2011

## ACTIVIST

*“What they’re doing now is to make it more harsh on people, anyone promoting homosexuality is being criminalized.”*

**In 2004, he cofounded Sexual Minorities Uganda Group (SMUG), Uganda’s first LGBT civil rights organization.**

David Kato was the founder of Uganda’s LGBT civil rights movement. He was an outspoken advocate for equality in a country with some of the harshest anti-gay laws. His murder brought global attention to the plight of LGBT people in Uganda and Africa.

Kato and his twin brother were raised in a conservative family in a small Ugandan village. He recalled being brainwashed to believe “it was wrong to be in love with a man.” He attended some of Uganda’s best schools before moving to South Africa in the mid-1990’s to pursue a teaching career. Inspired by South Africa’s LGBT civil rights movement, Kato became an activist.

In 1998, intent on dismantling the homophobia, Kato returned to Uganda, where homosexuality is a crime punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment. Uganda’s minister of ethics and integrity stated, “Homosexuals can forget about human rights.”

Despite the risks, Kato held a televised news conference pressing for LGBT civil rights. As a result, he suffered several arrests and beatings.

Undeterred but cautious, Kato continued to lead the movement while supporting himself as a teacher. In 2004, he cofounded Sexual Minorities Uganda Group (SMUG), Uganda’s first LGBT civil rights organization.

In 2009, the Ugandan legislature proposed a bill designating the death penalty for homosexuality. The following year, a Ugandan national newspaper published the names and photographs of gay rights activists, including Kato. It explicitly called for homosexuals to be executed by hanging.

Four months later, Kato was bludgeoned to death in his home. Local authorities claim his death had nothing to do with his sexual orientation.

In response to Kato’s death, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, “This crime is a reminder of the heroic generosity of the people who advocate for and defend human rights on behalf of the rest of us—and the sacrifices they make.”



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