

Ugandan pastors blast Rick Warren for opposing anti-gay law

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KAMPALA, Uganda (ABP) — A group of Ugandan pastors is calling on Southern Baptist mega-church pastor Rick Warren to apologize for his recent letter opposing anti-gay legislation pending in the east African nation.

The Uganda National Pastors Task Force Against Homosexuality [asked](#) Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif., to "biblically issue an apology for having wronged us" by intervening in the matter.

Rick Warren "Your letter has caused great distress and the pastors are demanding that you issue a formal apology for insulting the people of Africa by your very inappropriate bully use of your church and purpose driven pulpits to coerce us into the 'evil' of Sodomy and Gaymorrah," said signers led by [Martin Ssempe](#), a Ugandan pastor who in the past [worked](#) with Warren on prevention of AIDS in Africa.

Warren's association with Ssempe, a leading proponent of Uganda's proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009, led some U.S. critics to suggest that Warren supports the law that carries a death penalty for acts defined as "aggravated homosexuality."

After initially declining to take a position on the controversial law, Warren broke silence with a letter dated "Christmas 2009" strongly denouncing the anti-gay law and urging pastors in Uganda to work for its defeat

"As an American pastor, it is not my role to interfere with the politics of other nations, but it IS my role to speak out on moral issues," Warren wrote. "It is my role to shepherd other pastors who look to me for guidance, and it is my role to correct lies, errors, and false reports when others associate my name with a law that I had nothing to do with, completely oppose, and vigorously condemn."

After meeting Dec. 17 in the offices of Uganda's minister of ethics and integrity, 20 denominational heads formed a task force to respond to Warren's letter. The group chastised Warren for "unwarranted abuse of our duly elected officials who are in the process of making laws in the fulfillment of their mission."

The Ugandan pastors said the law is needed because incidents of homosexual abuse, recruitment of children into homosexual practice and promotion of homosexuality by organizations and in schools.

They said they don't want Uganda to repeat the mistake of Western societies like the United States, "where the issue of homosexuality was treated with kid-gloves as a minor, private issue, but these societies are waking up too late on realizing that the matter affects how their entire society is ran, what children are taught at school and literally what everybody 'must believe and practice.'"

They also cited the "take-over by homosexuals of western institutions that should have remained as defenders and protectors of moral integrity in society, particularly the church, to the extent that even evangelical church leaders in America no longer protest when a practicing homosexual is appointed into pastoral leadership in the church."

The Ugandan pastors also called on Warren to denounce the recent [appointment](#) of a lesbian as assistant bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, the second openly gay bishop in the worldwide Anglican

communion.

"The ordination of Mary Glasspool, a lesbian, as a bishop in Los Angeles without any condemnation from you has increased the widening gap between the global South church in Africa and the global North church in Europe and America," the ministers said. "In these increasingly dark days, we encourage you not to give in to the temptation to water down what the Bible says so as not to offend people."

The letter's signers described Warren as a friend who have bought many of his books and been blessed by them. "Do not let the pressure of bloggers and popular media intimidate you into becoming a negotiator for homosexual pedophilia rights in Africa," the letter said.

The pastors quoted Warren from 2007 as saying "The Bible says evil has to be opposed. Evil has to be stopped. The Bible does not say negotiate with evil. It says stop it. Stop evil."

"Since the Bible says that the giant of homosexuality is an 'abomination' or a great evil, you cannot achieve the PEACE plan without a purpose-driven confrontation with evil," the pastors wrote, referring both to Warren's best-selling book *The Purpose Driven Life* and his ambitious plan to apply his purpose-driven principles to improve life in Africa.

The pastors said there has been a lot of misinformation about applying the death penalty to gays. While the legislation under consideration reserves capital punishment only for aggravated acts like the rape of a child, the ministers said they support reducing the sentence for aggravated homosexuality from death to 20 years in prison.

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.