

DEC 17TH 2012 REPORT...INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS.



SEX WORKERS

in Nairobi on Monday morning staged a protest in the Central Business District (CBD) to complain about violence and injustices against them. Thousands of sex workers graced the event this year and came out with no fear.



The group was joined by several key gay activists and organizations that came out to condemn the "Kill the gay, Uganda bill"



They converged at the Freedom Corner in Uhuru Park from where they marched to City Hall to air their grievances.



Kenya Sex Workers Alliance (KESWA) National Coordinator John Mathenge pointed out that many of them have been killed and treated inhumanly by their clients and law enforcement agencies.

“For the past three months, sex workers have been murdered and we have been lodging these complaints. When we bring forward these complaints, we are arrested and jailed for two years. Please stop molesting sex workers,” he said.

He explained that discrimination against them should stop as everybody has a right to live their lives “the way they want.”

“Nobody is a judge. We only have one judge who is God. Whatever I do with my body is my problem... my body is my business,” he stated.



Daughtie Ogutu from the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) indicated that the society has turned its back on sex workers and no one speaks about them or even dares to intervene when a sex worker is abused or killed.



“The Kenya situation is very alarming. Two weeks ago, four sex workers were murdered in Thika, cases were lodged by the alliance but nothing was done about it. If this was a prominent Kenyan or any other citizen, there would be policemen trying to find out what happened,” she said. “However, because this is a sex worker, nobody cares and nobody gives a damn.”



Two months ago, Nairobi Mayor George Aladwa warned sex workers that they risked being arrested if they did not stop conducting their business in the CBD.

Aladwa said that stern action would be taken against any sex worker found conducting business within town.

The mayor urged the sex workers to use their talent in seeking income and desist from behavior that will land them in trouble.



Early this year, a taskforce report revealed that about 7,000 sex workers operate in Nairobi every night with each having an average of three to four clients.

The taskforce to investigate sex work in Nairobi further recommended that police and council officers be accompanied by female officers when arresting prostitutes.



The report said harassment of sex workers by council askaris and police officers was rampant.

The report also noted that most suspects secure their freedom by paying bribes or even sexual favors.

Also, some of the registered and licensed massage parlors are sex dens and brothels.

The taskforce made up of 26 persons from the civil society, public and private sector was formed to establish and recommend remedial measures on prostitution.



Phelister Abdalla, KESWA country coordinator also narrated how they have dealt with cases where sex workers have been assaulted and molested by clients. She emphasized how it has become a challenge to report such cases to the police since they still discriminated at the police stations and this leaves many both male and female sex workers in pain for lack of justice yet they ordinary citizens just like other Kenyans.

The sex workers graced the occasion with the condoms that were carried and distributed and these symbolized they ready and are fighting the spread of Hiv/Aids since they human too.



After the demonstration in town, all the sex workers gathered at Freedoms Corner where they registered as voters just like other citizens and they vowed they ready to vote for leaders who will help the country change for the best.

