

# Scott Lively, U.S. Pastor, Wages Uganda Anti-Gay Effort, Lawsuit Alleges



[BRIDGET MURPHY](#) 03/14/12 10:56 PM ET **AP**

BOSTON — An East African gay advocacy group filed a federal lawsuit Wednesday against a Massachusetts evangelist, alleging he has waged a decade-long campaign to persecute gays in Uganda.

The suit was filed in federal court in Springfield against minister Scott Lively under a statute that Sexual Minorities Uganda says allows non-citizens to file U.S. court actions for violations of international law.

Frank Mugisha, who heads the advocacy group, said it was singling out Lively for "helping spread propaganda and violence" against Uganda's gay people.

"We hope that he will be held accountable for what he did in Uganda," said Mugisha, who won the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award last year. "We want to send out a clear message to him and to others."

Lively, of Abiding Truth Ministries, is one of a handful of American pastors whom Ugandan gay activists accuse of having helped draft the original version of the African nation's anti-homosexuality bill.

The bill called for the death penalty for certain homosexual acts such as when gay people with AIDS were caught having sex. It has since been revamped to replace the death penalty with life imprisonment as a maximum sentence.

Lively said Wednesday the legal action was "absurd" and "completely frivolous." He said in an email to The Associated Press that he has never advocated violence against homosexuals. He said he has preached against homosexuality but advised therapy for gays, not punishment.

Lively also told the AP in November that he advised the Ugandan parliament "to focus on rehabilitation and not punishment." He said he didn't oppose the criminalization of gays but said imprisonment and the death penalty are too harsh. He was among U.S. evangelicals who visited Uganda in 2009, after which debate began about the bill.

About 70 protesters marched Wednesday about a half-mile from the U.S. District Court in Springfield to Lively's business, the Holy Grounds Coffee House. They dressed in black and beat drums, carrying signs with the names of persecuted Ugandans and coffins to symbolize death allegedly due to persecution. The group spent about 10 minutes in front of the coffee house, leaving white flowers there.

World leaders including President Barack Obama have condemned the Ugandan bill. But the draft legislation is popular in that country, where pastors frequently preach against homosexual behavior.

The Ugandan government said in a statement last month that it didn't support the bill, but that debate about it is allowed under the constitution.

The suit against Lively, whose Springfield church is known as Redemption Gate Mission Society, is part of wide-ranging legal action Ugandan gay groups are considering against individuals they consider hostile to the rights of homosexuals.

The complaint claims Lively issued a call in Uganda to fight against a "genocidal" and "pedophilic" gay movement, "which he likened to the Nazis and Rwandan murderers." The suit asks for a judgment that Lively's actions are illegal and violate international law and human rights.

Lively said in his email that his words have been taken out of context.

"Most of the ostensibly inflammatory comments attributed to me are from selectively edited video clips of my 2009 seminars in Kampala," he said. "I challenge the plaintiffs and their allies to publish the complete footage of the seminar on the Internet. They will not do this or their duplicity would be exposed."

The New York-based group Center for Constitutional Rights filed the suit on behalf of Sexual Minorities Uganda. Center attorney Pam Spees said it also seeks monetary damages.

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Associated Press writer Rodney Muhumuza contributed to this story from Kampala, Uganda.

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