

For Immediate Release

LGBT Rights: The 2013 ‘Hall of Shame’ *International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia*

(New York, May 17, 2013) – The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights program at Human Rights Watch today named its candidates to its annual “Hall of Shame” to mark the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. The American Center for Law and Justice; President Yahya Jammeh of Gambia; Vadym Kolesnichenko, a member of Ukraine’s parliament; and the Ukrainian political party Svoboda are undermining human rights by actively promoting homophobic policies, Human Rights Watch said.

On May 17, 2013, LGBT groups in over 100 countries will commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. The annual celebration began in 2004 to mark the 1990 decision by the World Health Organization to remove homosexuality from its rosters of disorders.

“Since our last ‘Hall of Shame’ there have been significant strides in many parts of the world toward equality for LGBT people, including in Uruguay, New Zealand, and France,” said [Graeme Reid](#), LGBT Rights director at Human Rights Watch. “The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is a day to celebrate these achievements and to challenge discriminatory practices against LGBT people.”

The 2013 Human Rights Watch “Hall of Shame” inductees were selected for endangering the lives and dignity of LGBT people in 2013. They strongly contributed to a homophobic and transphobic environment during the past year, Human Rights Watch said. They are:

- **The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), for attempting to export homophobia to Africa.** Founded in 1990 by the Baptist Minister and televangelist Pat Robertson, and headed by Jay Sekulow, its chief counsel, the ACLJ strongly opposes LGBT equality and reproductive rights in the United States and across the globe. It works through offshoot organizations such as the East African Centre for Law and Justice (EACLJ) in Kenya, the African Centre for Law and Justice (ACLJ) in Zimbabwe, and the Brazilian Center for Law and Justice (BCLJ) in Brazil. The EACLJ unsuccessfully lobbied against Kenya’s progressive new constitution in 2010 solely on the basis that the constitution’s anti-discrimination clause could eventually be used to advance LGBT equality and that it allows for abortion when the mother’s health is at stake.
- **Yahya Jammeh, the president of Gambia, for his homophobic vitriol and promotion of anti-gay laws.** At the opening of the Gambian Parliament in Banjul in March, Jammeh gave a stark warning to LGBT people in Gambia: “If you are convicted of homosexuality in this country, there will be no mercy for offenders.” Claiming that homosexuality is “anti-God, anti-human, and anti-civilization,” Jammeh issued a threat to all gay people in Gambia: “Homosexuals are not welcome in the Gambia. If we catch you, you will regret why you are born.” Jammeh’s homophobia has been persistent. In 2008 he promised “stricter laws than Iran” regarding homosexuality and to “cut off the head” of any LGBT

person found in Gambia. In 2012, 20 people were charged with committing “unnatural offenses,” but were acquitted because of lack of evidence. Because Gambia is the host country of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, its laws pose a threat to LGBT rights defenders throughout Africa who regularly conduct advocacy in Banjul.

- **Vadym Kolesnichenko, a member of the Ukraine parliament, for initiating one of two [draft laws](#) currently before parliament that would discriminate against LGBT people and infringe on their fundamental rights to free expression.** The first bill would prohibit the dissemination of positive information about homosexuality, including through such activities as rallies, parades, demonstrations, discussions, or special courses. The second bill provides for similar prohibitions on the publication and distribution of written or recorded products that present homosexuality in a positive light. Violators of the laws would face up to six and five years in prison, respectively.
- **The Ukrainian political party Svoboda, which holds 12 percent of seats in parliament, for including a pledge to “introduce criminal responsibility for propaganda of drug use and sexual perversions” as part of its party platform.** The party repeatedly speaks out against LGBT people’s rights and has announced its support for homophobic bills. On May 14 Iryna Farion, a Svoboda member of parliament, told media, referring to LGBT people: “They should be cured. I do not make comments about sick people. I don’t understand what you are asking me about. They need to be cured.” In July and December 2012, Svoboda party members were involved in [attacking a peaceful protest](#) against homophobic laws.

“Homophobia and transphobia are still very much alive and pose a daily threat to the basic human rights of LGBT people,” Reid said. “The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is a celebration of achievements and a reminder to all that human rights are universal and apply to everyone, including LGBT people.”

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