

LGBT meeting in Cameroon turns bloody as gay-bashers invade

Tuesday 30 July 2013, by [LEMBEMBE Eric O.](#) (Date first published: 19 June 2012).

The attack came during a gathering to mark the end of this year's International Day Against Homophobia celebrations in the Cameroonian capital of Yaoundé.

The time — about 11 p.m., Saturday, May 19. Representatives of several LGBTI organizations march one by one to the podium to discuss what the week's activities have meant to them.

Rounds of excited applause greet the speakers. The room heats up. It's time to party. A fashion show, awards presentations, songs and dances are coming up.

Outside in the courtyard about 10 men from the Nkomo neighborhood gather, having caught word of what they call "a gathering of fags."

"We must stop this," they say. "We don't want them here."

The news spreads by word of mouth through the neighborhood. Their numbers grow. Around midnight, they burst into the room. One of them hits a board against the ground.

Inside, the party atmosphere vanishes. Everyone panics. Some people run behind the podium, looking for an emergency door. Others hide under tables. The organizers call out, trying to restore calm.

Some people get away. Others not. Some are caught and beaten by the gang of gay bashers.

"Nearly two dozen people who came to the party were nearly beaten to death," says Yannick N, an organizer of the evening. "The abusers themselves said they wanted to do away with them."

Some gay men at the gathering were robbed of money, mobile phones, jewelry, identification papers, etc. Others were seized, insulted, beaten and injured. Some victims were stripped naked and forced to return home without clothes.

Gay bashers pulled gay men from taxis. They pursued young men running several thousand meters away from the party.

None of the organizers called the police because they know from experience that the police would have arrested the gay victims of the beatings rather than the gay bashers.

The gathering was organized as part of a week of IDAHO events in Yaoundé with the goal of providing a forum where young LGBTI artists could "pass along a positive message to the community." The event was supposed to include the announcement of winners of a competition for the best new work in poetry and song on the theme, "Challenging homophobia in and through education." The event was also supposed to include a fashion show, songs, dances, and pastiches of famous artists, but none of those were able to take place.

Other earlier activities of IDAHO week in Yaoundé came off without major incident, including:

- A sporting event between gay and straight teams, designed to challenge preconceived ideas about gay people.
- A screening of the 2009 film “Prayers for Bobby” by American director Russell Mulcahy, which provoked a discussion about whether it is possible to change a person’s sexual orientation.
- A gathering of 40 gay men who discussed methods of combating homophobia in Cameroon.
- A panel that included a teacher, a student, a journalist, a sociologist and others, who discussed ways to eliminate stigma against homosexuals.

Sponsoring organizations included Humanity First Cameroon and the Cameroonian Foundation For AIDS, or CAMFAIDS.

Yannick N. was philosophical about the events of May 19.

“Just when we were talking about how to combat homophobia through education, we were reminded how indispensable it is that we find ways to change the deeply distorted perception of LGBTI people in Cameroonian society,” he said.

Eric O. Lembembe

P.S.

* Posted on June 19, 2012:

<http://76crimes.com/2012/06/19/gang-beats-up-20-at-cameroon-anti-homophobia-meeting/>