


Criminalisation of Homosexuality

Updated 25 October 2015

	Nigeria	
<p>National Law:</p> <p><i>Criminal Code Act, Chapter 77, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990</i>¹</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S214: Carnal Knowledge against the Order of Nature² - S215: Attempt to Commit Carnal Knowledge against the Order of Nature³ - S217: Gross Indecency⁴ <p><i>Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act of 1959</i>⁵, applicable to all 19 states in Northern Nigeria.⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S284: Unnatural Offences⁷ - S405: Vagabonds. Definition includes at 405(2)(c) ‘any male person who dresses or is attired in the fashion of a woman in a public place or who practices sodomy as a means of livelihood or as a profession.; <p><i>Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013</i>⁸ (SSMPA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - S5(1): Entering into a same-sex marriage or civil partnership - S5(2): Registering, operating or participating in ‘gay clubs’ - S5(2): ‘Public show of amorous same-sex relationship’ - S5(3): Aiding or solemnising a same-sex marriage or supporting an LGBT organisation⁹ 	<p>Maximum Penalties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14 years’ imprisonment - 7 years’ imprisonment - 3 years’ imprisonment - 14 years’ imprisonment and/or a fine - Up to two years’ imprisonment and/or a fine - Penalty for an ‘incorrigible vagabond’ - defined at s 405(3) as any person who has been ‘convicted as a vagabond’ at least once already - up to three years’ imprisonment and/or a fine - 14 years’ imprisonment - 10 years’ imprisonment - 10 years’ imprisonment - 10 years’ imprisonment 	<p><u>Treaty Ratification</u></p> <p>AFRICAN CHARTER</p> <p>CAT</p> <p>CEDAW</p> <p>CEDAW OP</p> <p>CRC</p> <p>ICCPR</p> <p>ICESCR</p>

<p>*Additionally, at least 12 Northern Nigerian states (Zamfara, Bauchi, Kebbi, Jigawa, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kano, Niger, Borno, Gombe, Katsina, and Yobe) have adopted Islamic Sharia laws criminalising sexual activities between persons of the same sex. These Sharia laws run concurrently to secular state and federal laws.¹⁰</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Execution by stoning for men¹¹ - Up to 50 lashes and/or six months' imprisonment for women¹² 	
<p>Provisions applicable to both men and women: <i>Criminal Code Act: S214 and S215; Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013: S5 and Sharia Law 12 Northern Nigerian states</i> Provisions applicable only to men: <i>Criminal Code Act: S214; Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act of 1959: S284 and S405</i></p>		
<p>Enforcement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2014: In its Human Rights Report on Nigeria for 2014, the US Department of State found that <i>'LGBT persons reported increased harassment and threats against them' during 2014, but as of December 2014 'there were no reports of the government enforcing the SSMPA'</i>.¹³ The US Department of State also found that in the Northern Nigerian states that have adopted Sharia law, <i>'although no [death] sentences were imposed during the year, individuals convicted of same-sex activity were sentenced to lashing.'</i>¹⁴ - There have been a number of recent arrests and trials in Nigeria. Some examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o January 2015: An Islamic law enforcement agency, the Hisbah, arrested 12 men in the north Nigerian city of Kano for allegedly planning a same-sex wedding.¹⁵ The head of the Hisbah, Aminu Daurawa, told <i>Agence France-Presse</i> that the suspects "looked and acted feminine", which prompted their arrest.¹⁶ o 29 May 2014: Nigeria's <i>Leadership</i> newspaper reported that police in Asaba, Delta State <i>'uncovered a hideout of lesbians... and have arrested 26 suspects.'</i>¹⁷ o May 2014: 21 men were reportedly arrested in Ibadan for being in a <i>'gay cult,'</i> having been found with over 100 condoms in their possession.¹⁸ o 14 February 2014: Three men arrested - Ope Abeeb, 18 years, Samed Ojo, 20 years and Oluwasegun Adesina-Rasheed, 64 years. The men were arraigned, imprisoned and are awaiting trial.¹⁹ o 22 January 2014: Thousands of protestors threw stones into a Sharia court in 	

Bauchi, northern Nigeria, and demanded death sentences for the 11 men arrested for belonging to gay organisations. The court was forced to suspend the trial and security required to disperse the mob.²⁰

- **17 January 2014:** More than 30 people have been arrested, increasingly from the Christian southern states where enforcement is less common than in the Muslim north.²¹
- **17 January 2014:** Mubarak Ibrahim, a 20-year-old (one of the 12 accused on trial currently in the Bauchi sharia courts), was tried and convicted. He was flogged with a horse whip in public (20 lashes) and fined \$30.²²
- **16 January 2014:** 24 people have been arrested in three southern States (Agence France-Presse). Most had been detained previously and were re-arrested after the SSMPA was announced.²³
- **14 January 2014:** In the northern State of Bauchi, a crackdown took place immediately following the signing of the SSMPA resulting in the arrest of 38 men with searches continuing for a further 168 men, whose names were included on a list of suspects that had been compiled under conditions of torture.²⁴ Dorothy Aken'Ova, a rights activist with the Nigeria-based International Centre for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights, told the BBC that some of those arrested in Bauchi State were beaten up and tortured.²⁵
- **6 January 2014:** Five men appeared in a sharia court in Bauchi on charges of forming a gay club.²⁶
- **25 December 2013:** Police in northern Nigeria detained four men over the Christmas holidays and allegedly tortured them until they named others belonging to a gay organisation.²⁷
- **9 October 2013:** Two men, Emeka Eze, 35, and Jonathan Akatin, 22, were arraigned in the Northern city of Jos and charged with homosexual acts under section 284 of the *Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act*. Those arrests brought the total number of persons in prison or awaiting trial to 12.²⁸
- **1 October 2013:** Samuel Friday, 19, and Oni Oluwatobi, 18, were arraigned on charges of homosexual activity.²⁹
- **6 September 2013:** Police arrested 32 male undergraduate students for alleged homosexual acts.³⁰
- **August 2013:** A man identified as Sadiq was reportedly arrested and beaten based on allegations of homosexual conduct.³¹
- **6 August 2013:** Pastor Benjamin Ndubuisi was accused, charged and

	<p>prosecuted for having carnal knowledge with a 23-year-old man based on hearsay rumours by locals. LGBTI advocates allege that the accused may have been beaten during his detention.³²</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 17 January 2013: Police arrested seven men on suspicion of being homosexuals following a quarrel between two of them during which they accused each other of being homosexuals.³³ ○ 7 January 2013: Pastors Prince Ejimole and Lawrence Udo were arrested, charged and prosecuted for unlawful carnal knowledge after being caught having sex in a Lagos hotel.³⁴
<p>Statements by Public Figures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - July 2015: The Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari reported that during a visit to the United States of America <i>‘the issue of gay marriage came up... PMB [President Buhari] was point blank. Sodomy is against the law in Nigeria, and abhorrent to our culture.’</i>³⁵ - July 2015: The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja Diocese, John Cardinal Onaiyekan, said <i>‘even if people don’t like us for it, our church has always said homosexuality is unnatural and marriage is between a man and a woman... There is no question of the Catholic Church changing its positions on this matter.’</i>³⁶ - 27 February 2014: Three leading Nigerian Authors, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jackie Kay and Helon Habila, condemned the new Nigerian anti-homosexuality law and called for its repeal.³⁷ - 19 January 2014: Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, President of the Christian Association of Nigeria stated: <i>‘We call on all those talking about human rights and international conventions to remember that there is always a limit to certain rights and that those who go out of their ways to overstep the limits now know the consequences of their actions. ... Human rights without limit are recipes for the destruction of any society. The culture and morality of a people must be taken into cognizance because it is important to remember that culture and morality are intricately linked with each other. By the beliefs of most Nigerians, same sex marriage is offensive to us as a people.’</i>³⁸ - 14 January 2014: The Foreign Secretary of the UK expressed his disappointment that the SSMPA had received presidential assent: <i>‘We are concerned by the prospect this raises of further action against an already marginalised section of society.’</i>³⁹ - 30 July 2013: The report provided by Nigeria to the 2nd Cycle of the UPR made the claim that <i>‘sexual and gender minorities are not visible in Nigeria and there is no officially registered association of gays and lesbians.’</i>⁴⁰

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 20 July 2013: Nigerian Foreign Affairs Minister, Olugbenga Ashiru, criticised foreign diplomats for trying to ‘impose’ gay rights on Nigeria. The Minister declared: <i>‘It is not part of our own culture. It needs to evolve. Let us get to that stage of understanding that two men can marry, then we will get to the bridge and cross it.’</i>⁴¹ - 1 July 2013: Navi Pillay, the UN Human Rights Commissioner condemned Nigeria’s Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act: <i>‘I am very concerned that the rights of LGBT people, the sexual orientation rights are being violated, that they are subjected to discrimination.... I condemn this law of Nigeria because it violates the equality clause both in Nigerian law and also the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.’</i>⁴² - 30 May 2013: The Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill was passed by the House of Representatives. Among other things, the bill envisaged imprisonment of up to 10 years for anyone who <i>‘participates in gay clubs or organisations’</i> or <i>‘directly or indirectly makes public show of same-sex amorous relationships’</i>, as well as gaol terms for anyone who fails to report LGBTI people to the authorities. - January 2013: President of the Senate, David Mark, insisted that the SSMP bill was <i>‘irrevocable’</i> and <i>‘we will not compromise on this’</i>. Instead, Nigeria has to <i>‘prove to the rest of the world, who are advocates of this unnatural way that we Nigerians promote and respect sanity, morality and humanity.’</i>⁴³ - 13 December 2012: Nigerian Nobel Laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, criticised the (then) proposed anti-homosexuality bill: <i>If there are scientific explanations for homosexual conduct - and these have been expounded in profusion - then a process of education is called for, enabling a more empathetic response to what appears an aberration to the majority.</i>⁴⁴ - 26 July 2010: Bishop Nicolas Okoh, Nigeria's most senior Anglican cleric, and outspoken opponent of homosexuals and homosexual rights, stated that Nigeria is at risk of an <i>‘invading army of homosexuality, lesbianism and bisexual lifestyle’</i> and later <i>‘same sex marriage, paedophilia and all sexual pervasions [sic] should be roundly condemned by all who accept the authority of scripture over human life’.</i>⁴⁵ - September 2007: Anglican Bishop of Oyu, Isaac Orama, declared that homosexuals are <i>‘inhuman, insane, satanic and not fit to live’.</i>⁴⁶
<p style="text-align: center;">Persecution and Discrimination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing levels of mob violence, harassment, blackmail and extortion of the LGBTI community have been reported. Sometimes this occurs at the hands of the police. - August 2015: A podcast reported the story of a lesbian woman in Nigeria who was displaced from her home, blackmailed and faced the possibility of arrest in relation to her sexual orientation.⁴⁷ In a separate episode of the same podcast, a man told

of being '*subjected... to a compulsory everyday prayer and fasting session*' after coming out to his family.⁴⁸

- **1 June 2015:** A lesbian woman reportedly fled Nigeria despite having children because her family and friends criticised and alienated her for her sexual orientation.⁴⁹
- **May 2015:** A telephone poll of 1,000 Nigerians found that 87% of respondents support the SSMPA and only 11% would be willing to accept a family member if they were lesbian, gay or bisexual.⁵⁰
- **July 2014:** Ifeanyi Orazulike, who operates a clinic for HIV clinic for MSM and trans women in Abuja, told the International AIDS Conference of the impact that Nigeria's new SSMP law was having on HIV treatment. '*We used to have about 60 people a month; post-law it is down to about 10 to 15 people... For fear of going to prison, people preferred to stay at home on their sick bed.*'⁵¹
- **15 February 2014:** In Geshiri town near Abuja, a mob of about 40 men reportedly dragged a number of suspected gay men from their beds in the middle of the night, after smashing down doors to their homes in house-to-house raids. The victims were taken onto the streets and beaten with sticks spiked with nails, wires, whips and broken furniture. Members of the mob were shouting that they were '*cleansing the community*' of gays and '*we are working for Jonathan*'. Some were taken to the police station where officers looked on and insulted them while others joined in slapping and beating them. The mobs also attempted to burn down the houses of the suspected gay men. After the attack the mob wrote '*homosexuals, pack and leave*' on the homes of the men they assaulted and warned them '*if you come back, we will kill you*'. A senior police officer in the region gave the victims of the mob attack 48 hours to leave.⁵²
- **28 January 2014:** In Port Harcourt, southern Nigeria, two men were reportedly forced out of their home and made to masturbate and have anal sex while mobs of onlookers jeered and filmed them on camera phones. The footage was then posted and shared on social media.⁵³
- **22 August 2013:** In Ota, Ogun State of western Nigeria, a young man was beaten by a mob of villagers for allegedly being gay.⁵⁴
- **29 June 2013:** A gay man was entrapped by plain-clothes police who tricked his partner into meeting at a rendezvous and also arrested him at gunpoint. Both were charged under the SSMP Bill even though it had not been signed into law. They were detained for two days and released after paying a bribe.⁵⁵
- **24 June 2013:** A man was stopped by police who insisted on searching his phone and laptop. Gay pornography was found. Police obtained his parents' numbers

	<p>from his phone and threatened to tell them unless he paid a bribe.⁵⁶</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 14 January 2013: Three men were stripped, paraded through streets naked and then brutally beaten. Similar incidents are still being reported.⁵⁷
Legislative News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 24 March 2015: Voted in favour of a failed Russian draft decision at the UN General Assembly's Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) that would have had the Secretary-General withdraw his bulletin laying UN staff benefits for same-sex couples⁵⁸ - October 2014: Nigeria's Federal High Court dismissed a challenge to the SSMPA brought by Joseph Teriah Ebah, a Nigerian man who lives in the UK.⁵⁹ - January 2014: The SSMPA came into force. - 2013 (UPR) Nigeria rejected Recommendations to decriminalise consensual same-sex sexual activity.⁶⁰ The delegation noted that: <p><i>The issue of sexual orientation did not enjoy consensus within the United Nations human rights system, and all attempts to integrate sexual orientation into existing universally recognized human rights had so far failed. The overwhelming majority of Nigerians objected to same-sex relationships, on the basis of their deeply held religious, cultural and moral beliefs, against which no government could successfully legislate. There was no policy or practice of witch-hunting people on the basis of their sexual orientation... The delegation stated that Nigeria did not accept the recommendations on same-sex marriage because it conflicted with national and cultural values. A poll conducted in 2011 had indicated that 92 per cent of the people were against same-sex marriage.</i>⁶¹</p> - 2009: (UPR) Recommendations were made that the then Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill did not go ahead and that all other legislation which discriminates against and criminalises consensual same-sex sexual conduct be removed. It would seem these recommendations were rejected.⁶² - Nigeria Voted against the 2011 Human Rights Council Resolution (calling for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the human rights of LGBT people). - Nigeria was a signatory to the 2008 General Assembly Counter-Statement opposing the 2008 General Assembly Declaration (on Human Rights and Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity).

¹ Text of the law is : www.nigeria-law.org/Criminal%20Code%20Act-Tables.htm

² *Criminal Code Act, Chapter 21, s.214: 'Any person who- (1) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; or (2) has carnal knowledge of an animal; or (3) permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature; is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.'*

³ *Criminal Code Act, Chapter 21, s.215: 'Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences defined in the last preceding section is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for seven years. The offender cannot be arrested without warrant.'*

⁴ *Criminal Code Act, Chapter 21, s.217: 'Any male person who, whether in public or private, commits any act of gross indecency with another male person, or procures another male person to commit any act of gross indecency with him, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any male person with himself or with another male person, whether in public or private, is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for three years. The offender cannot be arrested without warrant.'*

⁵ Text of the law is reproduced in S. S. Richardson, *Notes on the Penal Code Law (Cap. 89 Laws of Northern Nigeria)* (3rd edition, Gaskiya Corporation Nigeria 1967)

⁶ *Penal Code (Northern States) Federal Provisions Act 1959, s 2*

⁷ Section 284 reads: 'Whoever has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to fourteen years and shall also be liable to fine. *Explanation* - mere penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to [commit the] offence described in this section.' With regard to the applicable procedure for this provision, S. S. Richardson writes at p187 of *Notes on the Penal Code Law (Cap. 89 Laws of Northern Nigeria 1963)* that 'no warrant is required for the arrest of an accused. The offence is not normally bailable and is not compoundable and may be tried in the High Court or a native court of grade A Limited or above.'

⁸ Text of the law is :

[http://www.placng.org/new/laws/Same%20Sex%20Marriage%20\(Prohibition\)%20Act,%202013.pdf](http://www.placng.org/new/laws/Same%20Sex%20Marriage%20(Prohibition)%20Act,%202013.pdf)

⁹ *Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013, s.5: '(1) A person who enter into a same-sex marriage contract or civil union commit an offence and are each liable on conviction to a term of 14 years in prison. (2) A person who registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organisations or directly or indirectly makes public show of same-sex amorous relationship in Nigeria commits an offence and shall each be liable on conviction to a term of 10 years in prison. (3) A person or group of persons who administers, witnesses, abets or aides the solemnisation of same-sex marriage or civil union, or supports the registration, operation and sustenance of gay clubs, societies, organisations, processions or meetings in Nigeria commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 10 years of imprisonment.'*

¹⁰ Sampson, I.T., 'Religion and the Nigerian State: Situating the de facto and de jure Frontiers of State–Religion Relations and its Implications for National Security', *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 3, 2, 2014, pp. 311-339

¹¹ Ostien, P., 'Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006', *A Sourcebook*, Vol 4, 2007, 68, http://www.sharia-in-africa.net/media/publications/sharia-implementation-in-northern-nigeria/vol_4_4_chapter_4_part_III.pdf

¹² Ostien, P., 'Sharia Implementation in Northern Nigeria 1999-2006', *A Sourcebook*, Vol 4, 2007, 71

¹³ US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Nigeria*, June 2015,

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¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Roberts, S., 'Nigeria: 12 arrested over "gay wedding"', *Gay Star News*, 27 January 2015, <<http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/01/27/nigeria-12-arrested-over-gay-wedding/>> accessed on 9 September 2015

¹⁶ France-Presse, A., *Sharia police arrest 12 in Nigeria over 'gay wedding'*, 27 January 2015, <<http://mg.co.za/article/2015-01-27-sharia-police-arrest-12-in-nigeria-over-gay-wedding>> accessed on 15 September 2015

¹⁷ Ogiugo, K.E., 'Police Uncover Hideout, Arrest 26 Lesbians In Delta', *Leadership*, 29 May 2014, <<http://leadership.ng/news/372604/police-uncover-hideout-arrest-26-lesbians-delta>> accessed on 9 September 2015.

¹⁸ Morgan, J., '21 young men arrested in Nigeria for being in a "gay cult"', *Gay Star News*, 17 May 2015, <<http://www.gaystarnews.com/article/21-young-men-arrested-nigeria-being-gay-cult170515-131971/#sthash.h1eNaNvR.dpuf>> accessed on 9 September 2015

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- ²⁴ Ibid.
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- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
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