

PRESS RELEASE

Iranti-org calls for increased Public Engagement on the Hate Crimes Bill

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In October 2016, the draft **Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill** was introduced into the public domain. Differing significantly from previous criminal legislation, the Bill makes provisions for the prosecution of both hate crimes and hate speech.

In the introduction of the Bill to the public, Justice Minister Michael Masutha explained that, “A hate crime is committed if a person commits any recognised offence that is a common law or statutory offence... and the commission of that offence is motivated by unlawful bias, prejudice or intolerance.”

The Bill goes further in criminalising hate speech, which it defines as the intentional communication or advocacy of hatred towards a person or group with the aim of inciting violence or harm. The communication of ‘contempt or ridicule’ over public online platforms is also outlined as a crime.

Although the Bill claims to provide for the prevention of hate crimes and hate speech, as well as reporting on the implementation, its application and administration as an integrated approach from government is unclear.

In order to create a forum for the LGBTIQ sector to engage on issues pertaining to the Bill, Iranti-org, in collaboration with the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), hosted a public engagement on the Bill, on the 11 November 2016. The engagement was attended by over one hundred individuals and organizations from across South Africa. A panel discussion formed the centerpiece of the event, where various academics, legal experts and activists made presentations and engaged with the audience on the Bill. The discussion led into a lengthy and robust debate. Concern was tabled around the deadline given by government in which to respond. The current deadline is 31 January 2017.

Iranti-org is part of a call from the LGBTI sector to extend the deadline for public comment to the end of June 2017 to allow for public comment, and a petition in this regard is being drawn up.

Iranti-org is a dedicated regional media and advocacy platform for lesbians, gender non-conforming, trans and intersex persons and their organisations.

Iranti-org is interested in creating a round table discussion on radio and other media platforms, with government and other parties affected by the Bill. Iranti-org believes this to be in the public’s interest.

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