

African Intersex Movement (AIM) Intersex Awareness Day Statement

October 26, 2020

On 26 October 1996, intersex people and allies held a public demonstration as an act against their exclusion from a clinical event in Boston, USA, at the annual conference of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Here they came to demand that the medical industry take notice of their denouncement of infant genital mutilation (IGM), and to recognise and accept intersex people as they are. 26 October has thus been earmarked as **Intersex Awareness Day** in commemoration of the day.

The African Intersex Movement (AIM) joins intersex human rights defenders worldwide to commemorate this historic day.

Since the inception of AIM in November 2017 in Johannesburg, South Africa, when 22 intersex people representing intersex organizations from seven African countries met for the first time, these organizations have been working tirelessly to make their voices heard.

The participants drafted a Public Statement to extend demands aiming to end discrimination against intersex people in Africa, and to ensure the right of bodily integrity, physical autonomy and self-determination.

Part of the statement read, “We affirm that intersex people are real, and we exist in all countries of Africa. As intersex people in Africa, we live in a society that perpetuates violence and killings of intersex people by cultural, religious, traditional and medical beliefs and practices. Therefore, we must be supported to be the drivers of social, political and legislative changes that concern us.”

From then on AIM has been committed to defending the rights of all intersex people across Africa through all intersex organizations, guided by these demands set out in the November 2017 statement.

Demands

- To put an end to infanticide and killings of intersex people led by traditional and religious beliefs.
- To put an end to mutilating and ‘normalising’ practices such as genital surgeries, psychological and other medical treatments through legislative and other means (such as education, policy and treatment protocol change). Intersex people must be empowered to make their own decisions affecting their own bodily integrity, physical autonomy and self-determination.
- To include intersex education in antenatal counselling and support.
- To put an end to non-consensual sterilisation of intersex people.

- To depathologise variations in sex characteristics in medical practices, guidelines, protocols and classifications, such as the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases.
- To ensure that sex or gender classifications are amendable through a simple administrative procedure at the request of the individuals concerned. All adults and capable minors should be able to choose between female (F), male (M), intersex or multiple options. In the future, sex or gender should not be a category on birth certificates or identification documents for anybody.
- To raise awareness around intersex issues and the rights of intersex people in communities and society at large.
- To create and facilitate supportive, safe and celebratory environments for intersex people, their families and surroundings.
- To ensure that intersex people have the right to full information and access to their own medical records and history.
- To ensure that all professionals and healthcare providers that have a specific role to play in intersex people's well-being are adequately trained to provide quality services.
- To acknowledge the suffering and injustice caused to intersex people
- To build intersex anti-discrimination legislation in addition to other grounds, and to ensure protection against intersectional discrimination.
- To ensure the provision of all human rights and citizenship rights to intersex people, including the right to marry and form a family.
- To ensure that intersex people are able to participate in competitive sport, at all levels, in accordance with their legal sex. Intersex athletes who have been humiliated or stripped of their titles should receive reparation and reinstatement.
- To recognize that medicalization and stigmatization of intersex people result in significant trauma and mental health concerns.
- In view of ensuring the bodily integrity and well-being of intersex people, autonomous non-pathologizing psycho-social and peer support be available to intersex people throughout their life (as self-required), as well as to parents and/or care providers.

To date Intersex citizens in Africa still suffer because of archaic colonial medical protocols that state Intersex persons have a diagnosis called Development of Sex Disorder, as AIM we outrightly reject this listing in the International Classification of Diseases and call upon the WHO to remove this highly stigmatised code that has only lead to great trauma, harm and sometimes death at the hand of medical practitioners.