



**Malawi – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 29 November 2016**

**Are LGBT people in heterosexual marriages treated differently to openly gay people in Malawi? Is it normal for LGBT people to meet in secret in Malawi for the purpose of homosexual relationships which they cannot maintain in public?**

Information on people in Malawi who are not openly gay was scarce among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

A document published on the gay-owned charitable travel and culture website GlobalGayz, in a section headed “CEDEP as a Second Home”, states:

“CEDEP holds two meetings a month—called Bring to Life—at their offices (photo below right) where members (15-20 at any one time) gather to talk about personal or organizational matters. A local psychologist facilitates the meeting as issues are raised such as sexual behavior, sexual identity, relationships, health education, coming out, and family/marriage issues. For some members it’s the first time in their lives they have ever been surrounded by other gay people talking openly about their sexuality and personal lives. The experience for newcomers (and ‘old timers’ as well) is like no other time in their usually closeted and secret lives. Being able to ask about deeply stirred feelings and suppressed ideas is powerful—a combination of church confession, giddy queer club, psychotherapy and a social party.” (GlobalGayz (14 February 2015) *Gay Malawi: Focused and Determined*)

This document also states:

“Unfortunately, at the present time there are no women members because ‘they are invisible—we can’t find them; they are afraid to be known to others beyond their close friends’, said Gift with some disappointment. ‘We want to include them but they are hard to mobilize for fear of being seen. It’s hard for us to find just one. If we could, we would then network to others, but they are suspicious.’ As well, young adult women are carefully supervised by their families and going out alone or after hours is not as easy. Protective parents are more on guard with girls than boys in this male-dominated society. Girls learn early in life to be cautious and obedient and self-censoring. No girl in her right mind would risk exposing her lesbian identity to strangers in public since it could bring horror and shame on her family.” (ibid)

An article published on the citizen journalist website Key Correspondents states:

“Daliso is scared to tell his relatives about his sexuality. ‘I tried to tell some close friends but most of them have since been shunning me. Of course I don’t trust even medical personnel, so I can’t access reproductive health services.’ His fears are well grounded. Malawians who publicly reveal they

are gay meet arrest at worst and fierce discrimination at best. When 26-year-old gay man Eric Samisa appeared on the local television with his bold 'legalise or kill us' speech, the police moved in quickly detaining both him and the reporter. He reportedly received death threats and has since gone into hiding." (Key Correspondents (16 May 2016) *A dangerous life if you're gay: Malawi's homophobic legislation*)

An article published on the US-based gay news website Erasing 76 Crimes states:

"Gays come out fighting: 'Kill us or give us our rights' ' is the headline on an article in today's The Times of Malawi and on the front page of Malawi News. In the article, no gays 'come out fighting.' But a gay Malawian man, Eric Sambisa, acknowledges to an interviewer that he is gay and is tired of being treated as a second-class citizen by the homophobic Malawian government and homophobic Malawian society. The Nyasa Times of Malawi also reported the story, saying that Sambisa was briefly detained by police after The Times of Malawi story was published and has since gone into hiding." (Erasing 76 Crimes (2 January 2016) *Gay Malawian appeals for justice; now he's in hiding*)

This article also states:

"The article also quotes a second man, identified by the pseudonym 'Fortune,' who says 'he is a born again Christian in the CCAP church,' referring to the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Malawi's largest Protestant denomination. Fortune says 'he has not told his congregation that he is gay fearing a repeat of what happened the last time' he was labeled as a homosexual." (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

## References:

Erasing 76 Crimes (2 January 2016) *Gay Malawian appeals for justice; now he's in hiding*

<https://76crimes.com/2016/01/02/gay-malawian-appeals-for-justice-now-hes-in-hiding/>

(Accessed 28 November 2016)

GlobalGayz (14 February 2015) *Gay Malawi: Focused and Determined*

<http://www.globalgayz.com/gay-malawi-focused-and-determined/>

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Key Correspondents (16 May 2016) *A dangerous life if you're gay: Malawi's homophobic legislation*

<http://www.keycorrespondents.org/2016/05/16/a-dangerous-life-if-youre-gay-malawis-homophobic-legislation/>

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**Sources Consulted:**

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European Country of Origin Information Network  
Erasing 76 Crimes  
Freedom House  
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database  
UK Home Office  
UNHCR Refworld  
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