

Stop Murder Music (Canada)

Working Group of the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group
(CCHRG)

December 7, 2007

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The Hon. Diane Finley, P.C., M.P.
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House of Commons
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Re: Denial of temporary work visa for Miguel Collins, aka Sizzla.

We, the coalition for the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign a Working Group of the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group, together with the undersigned organizations, wish to express our solidarity with all African and Caribbean lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, who continue to struggle for an environment free from violence, fear and discrimination.

We write to you collectively in reference to the upcoming concert performance by Jamaican dancehall artist Miguel Collins, aka Sizzla. We have call upon Citizenship and Immigration Canada to deny him entry to Canada.

Our concerns lie in the fact that Sizzla has openly advocated, encouraged and glorified the violence and murder of gays and lesbians in his music.¹ Sizzla has recorded dancehall tracks that include lyrics such as: "Batty boy fi dead"² and "Shot battybwoy, my big gun boom",³ which are typical of the exhortations to kill and maim lesbians and gay men in many popular dancehall songs.⁴ According to recent investigations by groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and community groups working on the front-lines in the Caribbean; dancehall hate propaganda fuels and reinforces anti-gay hatred and has directly coincided with the increase in hate crimes against gay men in Jamaica.

¹ See attached lyrics document.

² Queers must be killed! (English translation).

³ Shoot queers, my big gun goes boom (English translation).

⁴ See Human Rights Watch, Vol. 16 No.6 (B).

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To date Sizzla has remained unapologetic for his incitement of violence and murder against gays and lesbians, and continues to profit from the royalties of his anti-gay tracks.

This incitement of violence and murder offends Canadian law and values. In particular, we would like to highlight Sections 318 and 319 of the *Criminal Code* which make it a criminal offence to advocate killing members of a group based on their sexual orientation or to publicly incite or promote hatred based on a person's sexual orientation. In addition, Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits communication of messages that are likely to expose a person to hatred on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Because Sizzla has become a symbol of pro-gay hatred in Jamaica and elsewhere, his presence in Canada can be perceived as a license to incite violence. In the past, Canada has denied entry visas to individuals who promote racist violence and other forms of hatred. Canada now has the power and duty to forbid the entry of those who incite hatred and open violence against people based on their sexual orientation. Canada can and must be an international leader in the fight against social injustice by condemning hate and violence in this "murder music".

We, the coalition for the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign, value freedom of expression, but this right does not include speech that incites hatred and murderous violence against a person based on his or her sexual orientation. The federal and provincial government has a legal obligation to protect the rights of its citizens, especially those who remain vulnerable to stigma, fear, discrimination and hate.

Artists like Sizzla continue to perpetuate the stereotypes that promote homophobia and discrimination in the African and Caribbean diaspora, which not only encourages anti-gay/lesbian violence, but also directly hampers the fight against HIV/AIDS in these communities. A recent report by the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO) identified deep-rooted homophobia in Caribbean culture, which translates into the belief that HIV is a "gay disease", as a major barrier to addressing HIV with Caribbean diaspora communities.⁵ Allowing an artist such as Sizzla to enter Canada undermines the hard work of groups such as ACCHO, the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black Cap) and the numerous other AIDS service organizations in Canada fighting the rise in HIV infection within the African and Caribbean diaspora in Canada.

⁵ http://www.accho.ca/pdf/hiv_stigma_report.pdf

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We, the coalition for the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign, have also call on the Canada Border Services Agency to ban the import of products by Sizzla, and other similar homophobic and anti-gay artists that contain "murder music". The legal dissemination of murder music by third-party distributors creates an unacceptable loophole in the application of our *Criminal Code* and custom regulations. We have separately asked that Canadian record retailers, distributors, sponsors, promoters, broadcasters, and other telecommunication companies comply with Canadian laws and regulations against hate by ceasing all support and promotion of "murder music" on Canadian airwaves, retail stores, venues and Canadian-controlled internet web sites.

We urge you to act immediately and as a sign of solidarity with our cause to fight all forms of hate and discrimination, we urge the Police to investigate charging Sizzla for advocating and promoting the assault and murder of gays and lesbians. We also ask the Police to inform sponsors and promoters that they could also be charged criminally for aiding and abetting Sizzla, if they provide him with a platform to perform his hateful lyrics.

We collectively thank you for your leadership and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO)

Dr. Winston Husbands
Co Chair

African Canadian Social Development Council

Raymond G. Micah
Executive Director

Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA)

Fanta Ongoiba
Executive Director

**AIDS 2006 Toronto Local Host
XVI International AIDS Conference**

Darryl Perry
Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer

AIDS Committee of Durham

Peter Richtig
Executive Director

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AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)

Lori Lucier
Executive Director

Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAAP)

Firdaus Ali
Executive Director

Amnesty International LGBT (Canada)

Alfonso Perez
Treasurer

Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP)

Shannon Ryan
Executive Director

Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

Richard Elliott
Executive Director

Center for Research-Action on Race Relations (CRARR)

Fo Niemi
Executive Director

Egale Canada

Helen Kennedy
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Gay and Lesbian Asians of Montreal (GLAM)

Alan Wong
Coordinator

Gays and Lesbian of African Descent

Lydia Makoroka
Core Team Leader

Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG)

Gareth Williams
Programs Director

LEGALE McGill OutLaw

Eric Boschetti
Executive Coordinator

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Peel HIV/AIDS Network

Erica Opoku

African Diaspora Capacity Building and Health Promotion Coordinator

POZPLANET.COM

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Creative Director

Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN)

Trevor Gray

Youth Outreach Coordinator

OutRage!

Peter Tatchell

Human Rights Campaigner, London UK

cc: *The Right Hon. Robert Douglas Nicholson*
The Right Hon. Stockwell Day, P.C., M.P.
Barrie Chief of Police Wayne Frechette
Calgary Chief of Police - Jack Beaton
Cambridge Chief of Police R. Larry Gravill
Edmonton Chief of Police - Mike Boyd
Kingston Chief of Police Bill Closs
Montreal Chief of Poilce Yzan Delorme
Ottawa Chief of Poilce Vern White
Quebec City Chief of Poilce Serge Belisle
St. Catherines Chief of Police Wendy Southall
Toronto Cheif of Police William Blair
Vancouver Chief of Police Jim Chu
Victoria Chief Paul Battershill

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Dancehall Songs Referred to in the Letter⁶

Album: Buzz⁷
Track: Pump Up
Artist: Sizzla
Release Date: 16 Oct 2001
Label: Black Shadow

Step up inna front line

Step up to the front line

Fire fi di man dem weh go ride man behind

Burn the men who have sex with men from behind

Shot battybwoy, my big gun boom

Shoot queers, my big gun goes boom

Album: Red Alert⁸
Track: Boom Boom
Artist: Sizzla
Release Date: 27 Jan 2004
Label: Charm Records

Boom boom! Batty boy them fi dead

Boom Boom! [as in gunshots] Queers must be killed

Album: Dancehall Anthems⁹
Track: Get to Da Point
Artist: Various Artists
Release Date: 16 Oct 2001
Label: Greensleeves

Sodomite and batty bwai mi seh a death fi dem

Sodomite and queers, I say death to them

Mi no trust Babylon fi a second yah so

I don't trust Babylon for a second

Mi a go shot batty bwai dem widdi weapon ya

I go and shoot queers with a weapon

Do di walk, mek mi see the light and di torch dem fast

Do the walk, quickly let me see the lighter and torch

⁶ The translations of the Reggae/Dancehall tracks listed in the OutRage!/Stop Murder Music dossier were done in Jamaica by a Jamaican patois speaker, who is also a professional translator; and some of them were also independently corroborated by translators appointed by the Metropolitan Police in London, UK. None of the singers, managers or promoters has ever denied the translation of the lyrics.

⁷ See <http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/Dancehall-Dossier-FINAL.pdf>

⁸ See <http://www.petertatchell.net/popmusic/Dancehall-Dossier-FINAL.pdf>

⁹ See Human Rights Watch, Vol. 16 No.6 (B).