



Ian McKellen to lead protest against anti-LGBTQ+ laws in Commonwealth

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Ian McKellen LGBTQ+ Commonwealth

Actor and [LGBTQ+](#) rights campaigner Ian McKellen will launch a march in central London on Saturday 30 May. It will protest against the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ people in 29 Commonwealth member states under colonial-era laws originally imposed by the UK.

The march starts at 12 noon, outside the Nigerian High Commission, 9 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BX.

LGBTQ+ people still at risk in Commonwealth

Six Commonwealth countries have a maximum sentence of life in prison. In Uganda, Brunei and northern Nigerian states, same-sex relations can carry the death penalty.

Many of those attending the protest are LGBTQ+ refugees who have fled persecution in Commonwealth nations.

For 77 years, the two-yearly Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting has refused to recognise LGBTQ+ human rights, or even allow a discussion of the issue.

Campaigners say millions of LGBTQ+ people across the Commonwealth continue to face arrest, imprisonment, violence and discrimination, solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is organised by the Peter Tatchell Foundation alongside Out and Proud Africa LGBTI, Let Voice be Heard (Bangladesh), Gay Indian Network (GIN) and the African Equality Foundation.

The "Commonwealth Walk of Shame" will begin with a speech by Ian McKellen to send off marchers to protest outside eight Commonwealth High Commissions that criminalise LGBTQ+ people:

Nigeria, Uganda, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad & Tobago, Ghana, Jamaica, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The march comes as the Commonwealth seeks to project itself as a modern organisation committed to democracy, equality and human rights.

Deborah Birunji Nabisere of Out and Proud Africa LGBTI, a lesbian who has fled persecution in Uganda, said:

I know what it means to live under laws designed to erase your humanity. We are marching because silence has protected persecution for far too long. Commonwealth leaders cannot celebrate unity while millions of LGBT+ citizens live in fear.

For many LGBT+ people across Africa and the Commonwealth, these laws are not abstract. They shape every part of daily life: whether you can speak openly, whether you can find work, whether you are safe walking home.

McKellen said:

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No one should face prison, violence or death for being themselves and loving another person. Yet across most of the Commonwealth, LGBT+ people are still treated as criminals.

Many of these laws are relics of the British Empire. The least we in Britain can do is stand in solidarity with those fighting to overturn criminalisation. I am proud to support this march and the brave activists leading the struggle for LGBT+ equality.

Peter Tatchell said:

For decades, Commonwealth leaders have failed to end the persecution of LGBT+ people. We urge the new Commonwealth secretary-general, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey of Ghana, to begin her tenure by making clear that anti-LGBT+ victimisation is incompatible with Commonwealth values.

29 Commonwealth countries still criminalise homosexuality, mostly under British colonial-era laws, in direct violation of the Commonwealth Charter's commitment to equality and non-discrimination.

Across the Commonwealth, millions of LGBT+ people continue to face arrest, imprisonment, violence and discrimination in employment, housing, education and healthcare.

Event details

Commonwealth Walk of Shame Against Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws

Date: Saturday 30 May 2026

Time: 12 noon

Location: Nigerian High Commission, 9 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5BX

Organisers:

- [Peter Tatchell Foundation](#)
- [Out and Proud Africa LGBTI](#)
- [Let Voice be Heard \(Bangladesh\)](#)
- [Gay Indian Network \(GIN\)](#)
- [African Equality Foundation](#)

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By [The Canary](#)

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