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## 'How hate crimes laws forced me into exile' Pro-family activist stages own disappearance

Posted: April 20, 2009  
8:45 pm Eastern

By Alyssa Farah  
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Julio Severo, a prominent Brazilian pro-family activist, has been forced into exile because of the "hate crimes" laws that are being implemented in his native land, perhaps providing a preview of what Christians can expect in the United States should similar "hate crimes" proposals be implemented.



Brazilian pro-family activist Julio Severo

And several organizations are reporting Congress could begin adopting measures similarly draconian to Brazil's as early as this week.

"It is imperative that we contact all members of the House and demand that they vote against this bill as **it will not protect a pastor, Bible teacher, Sunday School teacher, youth leader or anyone else from prosecution** if he or she teaches against homosexuality if an individual who hears their message then goes out and commits a crime against a homosexual," wrote Pastor Rick Scarborough of [Vision America Action](#), which as a [website link](#) to make that contact.

"Hate crimes laws that include sexual orientation are a bad idea, because they elevate homosexuality to the same status as race and do nothing to prevent violent crimes. All crimes are motivated by hate," said Mathew Staver, chief of [Liberty Counsel](#), which also is alerting people to the congressional plans.

"Hate crimes laws will not be used to punish the perpetrators but will be used to silence people of faith, religious groups, clergy, and those who

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support traditional moral values," Staver said.

Severo reports he was forced to flee his homeland after federal prosecutors there recently charged him with "homophobia" for his statements about the nation's "Gay" Parade in 2006.

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Severo told WND that while Brazil does not criminalize Christianity, it does regulate what biblical principles can and cannot be preached, and it bans biblical citations that disapprove of the homosexual lifestyle.

"Brazil grants freedom to preach Christianity, provided that the sermons avoid negative mentions of state-protected behaviors and cultural trends," Severo said. "The Brazilian government is establishing more and more categories of protected behaviors, banning negative mentions. So Brazilian preachers need to get updated on the latest political changes and preach a Gospel according to the state interests."

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He said, "Today it is risky to preach a complete Gospel in Brazil. Because of the diversity politics, you cannot say anything negative about witchcraft, especially when such practices are from Africa."

He cited an example of what is happening.

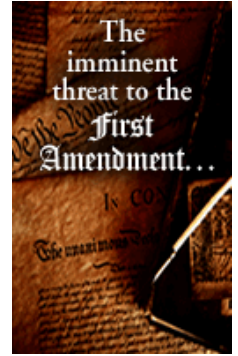
"In Rio, a Pentecostal minister led a criminal to Jesus and convinced him to deliver himself to police. Rev. Isaías da Silva Andrade accompanied the former criminal to police and when they asked how his life had been changed, the minister answered that the former criminal lived under the influence of demons from Afro-Brazilian religions which inspired him to criminal conduct, but now he found salvation in Jesus. Because of this innocent account, Rev. Andrade is now being prosecuted for discrimination against the Afro-Brazilian 'culture'! If condemned, he will serve between two and five years in jail," Severo said.

Severo reported on his blog that prosecutors were working to find him by demanding his address from friends and acquaintances.

So he said he took matters into his own hands to protect himself and his family, as well as his friends, from further discrimination.

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ow hate crimes laws forced me into exile'

"I was forced to leave the country with my family: a wife in the advanced stages of pregnancy and two little children," he reported on his [blog](#). "We are now in a place that is completely foreign to us. What choice did we have?"

He said Brazil has no law stating that the broadly interpreted "homophobia" – a term used derogatorily against those who choose to follow biblical precepts and not endorse homosexuality – is illegal.

But he said case rulings show that it is considered a crime. In fact, he said Brazil is one of a growing number of countries cracking down on "homophobia."

Severo said an influential homosexual activist attempted to publish his name and [contact information](#), which he believes was an attempt to intimidate him. He said he became alarmed and concerned for his own safety and that of his family.

"Because of the fierce opposition of gay militants and their charges against me, I had limited freedom to appear openly in Brazil," Severo said. "The most important homosexual leader in Brazil tried to publish my complete name, physical address and telephone number, in a stealth way of intimidating me. Yet, even now I have to be careful."

WND has reported that the Obama administration has stated its dedication to strengthening "federal hate crimes legislation" and expanding "hate crimes protection."

Gary Cass of the [Christian Anti-Defamation Commission](#) was among those raising the warning of impending "hate crimes" legislation in the United States.



President Barack Obama

"One of the gravest threats to religious liberty and freedom of speech is proposed hate crime legislation. Even while national attention is focused on the economy and Obama's radical economic and foreign policy, the far left is at work undermining our First Amendment rights at home with hate crime legislation," he said.

"In other countries where these types of laws have been implemented, pastors and Christians have been jailed and fined for their faithful adherence to the Scriptures," he said.

He reported Barney Frank, an openly homosexual congressman, announced Thursday that the House Judiciary Committee will be considering "hate crimes" legislation, H.R. 1913, this week.

"Frank is expecting the committee to pass the bill which would leave it in the House to vote on later this spring, according to a news release issued by Barney Frank on his website last week," Cass said.

As reported earlier by CADC, the bill, H.R. 1913, is named the Local Law Enforcement Hate [Crimes Prevention](#) Act. The bill already had 42 co-sponsors. The bill was introduced into the House on April 2 by U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

"All freedom loving Americans must voice their opposition to this bill. If this bill passes it lays the foundation for censoring Christians. In other

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countries, like in Canada and Sweden, where these types of hate crime laws have been implemented, pastors and Christians have been jailed and fined for their faithful adherence to biblical values," he said.

Also raising the alarm was the [Traditional Values Coalition](#), where Executive Director Andrea Lafferty said, "the so-called hate crimes bill will be used to lay the legal foundation and framework to investigate, prosecute and persecute pastors, business owners, Bible teachers, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, Christian counselors, religious broadcasters and anyone else whose actions are based upon and reflect the truths found in the Bible."

The organization warned based on a broad definition of "intimidation," even "a pastor's sermon could be considered 'hate speech' ... if heard by an individual who then acts aggressively against persons based on any 'sexual orientation.'"

The organization noted during markup of the plan in a 2007 committee hearing, Rep. Artur Davis, D-Ala., admitted that the law would not protect a pastor from prosecution.

Scarborough reported the U.S. plan is to be voted on in the House Judiciary Committee Wednesday.

"Hate crimes laws are actually 'thought crimes' laws that violate the right to freedom of speech and of conscience," warned Liberty Counsel. "Hate crimes laws will have a chilling effect on people who have moral or religious objections to homosexual behavior. Evidence of a person's beliefs will be used against any individuals who are even suspected of criminal activity.

"Hate crimes laws are unnecessary, as criminal laws already provide criminal penalties for the violent crimes," the organization continued. "Additional penalties will subject individuals to scrutiny of their beliefs, rather than focusing on a person's criminal actions, and will do nothing to prevent crime."

Severo said, "If they wish to continue with their absurd acts against me for 'homophobia,' I state that I am no longer in Brazil. Leave my friends in peace."

But that doesn't mean people won't hear from him.

"I will not be silenced. The voice that God gave me will continue to be used to alert Brazil, whether I am in India, Kenya, Nicaragua, or any other country in the world," he said.

The article that originally sparked controversy, in which Severo criticized Brazil's homosexual parade, also urged homosexuals to repent of their behavior and turn to Christianity. The article went on further to suggest that there are links between homosexual organizations and pedophilia.

Some in the U.S. are fighting back, too, including Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas.

He appears [in a YouTube video arguing against the earlier plan](#).

"A large part of this is that many people do not understand the Christian heart," he said. "They just don't like people who disagree with them. The true Christian heart can disagree with people, and still love them deeply,"

he said.

But the law, Gohmert said, would allow prosecutors to "go after a minister ... who says [sexual] relations outside of the marriage of a man and a woman are wrong."

The congressman says if there is a crime, and the suspect says he was inspired by a minister, the preacher suddenly also would be a defendant in the crime.

The video is here:



Tony Perkins of [FRC Action](#) also was busy [alerting his constituents](#).

He emphasized that the scenario explained by Gohmert not only is possible but probable.

"How would it happen? A federal 'hate crimes' law prohibiting 'bodily injury' could be construed by many law enforcement officials and judges to include words that inflict emotional or [psychological](#) distress," he said. "That means an 'offended' homosexual could accuse a religious broadcaster ... a pastor ... Sunday School teacher ... or other individual of causing emotional injury simply by expressing the biblical view that homosexual behavior is morally wrong and unhealthy.

"That's all it could take to trigger a wave of federal prosecutions and begin an era of censorship like America has never seen!" he warned.

Critics have said "hate crimes" laws actually criminalize thought because they demand enhanced penalties because of the "perception" of the victim by the perpetrator. A mugger, for example, who attacks a victim while screaming an epithet denoting a race or sexual preference could get a much more significant penalty than a mugger who attacks a victim but doesn't say anything.

Matt Barber, director of cultural affairs at [Liberty Counsel](#), has spoken out repeatedly in opposition to the idea.

"The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees

equal protection under the law," he said. "Hate crimes legislation is ... [a] violation of the Fourteenth Amendment in that it elevates one class of citizen based upon their chosen sexual behaviors above other people."

Coral Ridge Ministries, launched by the late D. James Kennedy, has published a book on the issue by John Aman, who says such laws put into doubt "the future of religious liberty and freedom of speech for Christians."



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*Alyssa Farah is a WND editorial assistant.*



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