**Filler**Brunei’s sultan called for Islamic teachings in the country to be strengthened as strict new sharia punishments were due to come into full force on Wednesday. The tough penal code in the tiny country on tropical Borneo island is set to be fully implemented following many years of delays.

**Boycott**Clooney’s call to boycott nine Brunei-owned hotels in Europe and the United States last week catapulted the issue into the international headlines. Since then, a series of well-known figures have lined up to add their names to the chorus of condemnation, including former US vice president Joe Biden and TV host, Ellen DeGeneres.

**Punishment**The laws, which include limb amputation for thieves, and death by stoning for gay sex and adultery, makes Brunei the first in Southeast Asia to have sharia penal code at the national level. Rape and robbery are also punishable by death under the code and many of the new laws, such as capital punishment for insulting the Prophet Mohammed.

**Health**  
“The rising number of homosexuals in Brunei reflects our failure in promoting the true Islamic way of life”, says the sultan. The sultan revealed the Health Department’s report attributing the rising number of HIV cases in the country due to homosexual activities and an unhealthy lifestyle, and noted that HIV infections have increased recently.

**Filler**The sultan first called for the penal code in the late 1990s and it appears to enjoy broad support in the former British protectorate of about 400,000 people. It is unclear whether death by stoning will be implemented, as high burden of proof is needed to hand down the punishment and Brunei has not executed anyone for decades.