

Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review of

Uganda

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Submitted by:¹

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JUSTICE

¹ A description of the submitting organizations is on page 2-3. Contact information for the submitting organizations is in Annex 1.

Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center (KHRC)

Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center (KHRC) is a non-governmental organization founded in 1968 by the family and friends of former United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy to continue his legacy of fighting for a more just and peaceful world. The international advocacy and litigation team works to protect human rights across Africa, the Americas, and Asia, with a particular emphasis on protecting civic space. KHRC participates directly in strategic litigation of emblematic cases at the international and regional level.

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

The Committee to Protect Journalists is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1981 that promotes press freedom worldwide. CPJ defends the right of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisal.

CPJ's work is based on its research, which provides a global snapshot of obstructions to a free press worldwide. CPJ reports on violations in repressive countries, conflict zones, and established democracies alike. CPJ also provides comprehensive, life-saving support to journalists and media support staff working around the world through up-to-date safety and security information and rapid response assistance.

Collaborate on International Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)

The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) is one of two centres established under the Catalysing Access to Information and Communications Technologies in Africa (CATIA) initiative, which was funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID). CIPESA focuses on decision-making that facilitates the use of ICT in support of good governance, human rights, and livelihoods.

CIPESA's establishment in 2004 was in response to the findings of the Louder Voices Report for DfID, which cited the lack of easy, affordable, and timely access to information about ICT-related issues and processes as a key barrier to effective and inclusive ICT policy-making in Africa. As such, our work responds to the shortage of information, resources, and actors consistently working at the nexus of technology, human rights, and society.

Cyrus R Vance Center for International Justice (Vance Center)

The Vance Center is a nonprofit organization that provides pro bono legal support, in partnership with leading law firms, to civil society organizations and independent human rights experts working across the globe on 1) human rights, 2) the environment, 3) public interest reporting, and 4) institutional integrity. We further engage law firms, bar associations, and pro bono clearinghouses through initiatives to strengthen pro bono practices and build systemic support for public interest law and an ethical legal profession. The Vance Center was established in 2002 as the international program of the New York City Bar Fund.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 10 million people who campaign for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. Our vision is for every person to enjoy all the rights enshrined in the universal declaration of human rights and other international human rights standards.

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The Stanford Law School International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic

The Stanford Law School International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic works on urgent, under-addressed, and emerging human rights issues in partnership with advocates and communities around the world. This work spans five practice areas: equality and non-discrimination, peace and justice, rights across borders, civic space, and climate justice. The Clinic trains students to be critical, creative, and reflective human rights advocates and equips them with a broad set of human rights lawyering skills, including litigation, fact-finding, legal and policy analysis, and strategic advocacy.

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I. Introduction

1. Uganda enters its fourth Universal Periodic Review at a critical moment for the protection and promotion of human rights, with the review offering an opportunity to assess implementation of its obligations under international and regional human rights instruments across a wide range of issues.¹
2. During its last review on January 27, 2022, Uganda received 273 recommendations, of which it accepted 139 and noted 134, reflecting significant outstanding concerns, particularly in relation to civic space, accountability of security agencies, protection of journalists and human rights defenders (HRDs), electoral freedoms, non-discrimination, freedom of expression, and reform of restrictive laws.² While some progress has been recorded since the previous cycle, persistent gaps remain in the effective implementation of Uganda's human rights obligations.
3. This submission examines severe restrictions imposed on civil society and related human rights violations committed against HRDs, journalists, political opposition, and the public, often for exercising rights and freedoms guaranteed by international and regional human rights instruments, and by Ugandan law. The government uses broad, vague, and discretionary laws and regulations to arbitrarily punish individuals critical of the government. Violations intensify during electoral periods. Repressive tactics used during the 2021 elections and raised during the 2022 UPR cycle persisted in the recent national elections held in January 2026. Attacks on LGBTIQ+ people and the activism to sustain it have only worsened since the last UPR cycle.

II. Background and Recent Developments

1. Since 2022, Uganda's human rights status has continued to deteriorate. The enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act Cap. 117 (AHA) has led to widespread discrimination, violence, and the criminalization of LGBTIQ+ activism. Civic space has further narrowed through restrictive NGO regulations and surveillance, while reports of torture and ill-treatment in detention persist despite constitutional protections. Collectively, these developments reflect a pattern of systematic rights violations, including infringements on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and serious concerns regarding equality before the law and protection from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

Legal Framework

2. Uganda acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1995, and is therefore obligated to respect, protect, and promote the ICCPR rights.³ These commitments are reflected in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Charter),⁴ and the Ugandan Constitution, which guarantees, among other rights, the freedoms of expression, movement, religion, peaceful assembly, and association.⁵

3. During the third UPR cycle in 2022, the Ugandan government noted recommendations for protecting civic space and the rights that sustain it, including the right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, expression, and political participation, and “by adapting the laws restricting those freedoms to international standards and by combating impunity for attacks targeting journalists, HRDs and peaceful political actors.”⁶

Positive Legislative Developments

4. Uganda has shown progress towards some of its human rights obligations, driven by decisions from the Constitutional Court. In January 2023, the Court struck down offensive communication as a criminal offence. In March 2026, the Court took a step forward by decriminalizing defamation, a provision in the Penal Code Cap. 128, described as “the most lethal weapon against media freedom in Uganda.”⁷ Then Court ruled Section 162 as inconsistent with Uganda’s international commitments to freedom of expression under Article 19, ICCPR and Article 9 of the African Charter.⁸ The “vague” law, the Court explained, “[f]ell short of the requirement that the law must be formulated with sufficient precision to enable an individual to regulate his or her conduct accordingly.”⁹ In the same decision the Court struck down the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022 as an overly broad, vague and repressive cybercrime law.
5. The Uganda Law Revision (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2023 repealed other problematic provisions of the Penal Code, including crimes of vagrancy, sedition, and false news.¹⁰ Section 50 defined false news as a “false statement, rumor, or report which is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturb the public peace.”¹¹ In *Onyango Obbo and Another*, the Supreme Court held that Section 50 was unconstitutional, overbroad and a violation of the right to freedom of expression.¹² The provision was not repealed until 2023 when the Uganda Law Reform Commission Act Cap 27 mandated the Uganda Law Reform Commission to review statutes. The rest of the Penal Code Act remains intact.¹³ Maintaining the other vague provisions—such as Section 38 criminalizing “promoting sectarianism,” defined as making statements that “degrade” or promote “feelings of ill will or hostility” on account of religion tribe or ethnic origin, Section 120 criminalizing “inciting violence,” and Section 179 criminalizing libel—is inconsistent with *Onyango Obbo and Another* and contrary to obligations under the ICCPR.

Negative Legislative Developments

6. Uganda has doubled down on restrictive laws that violate its international commitments, namely the AHA Cap. 117, NGO (Amendment) Act (2024), Public Order Management Act Cap. 326 (POMA), Anti-Money Laundering Act Cap. 118, Anti-Terrorism Act Cap. 120, Penal Code Act (amended 2007), and Protection of Sovereignty Act (2026).
7. In April 2024, the Constitutional Court upheld the AHA, signed by President Museveni in May 2023, broadening criminalization of consensual same-sex conduct between adults. The AHA is one of the most extreme anti-LGBTIQ+ laws in the world.¹⁴ Some organizations have been heavily involved in propagating anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric and legislation.¹⁵ The AHA violates rights to freedom of expression, association, liberty, and

right to privacy, imposes the death penalty for “serial offenders” and “aggravated homosexuality” (same-sex acts involving minors, disabled individuals, or forced acts), and life imprisonment for consensual same-sex conduct.¹⁶ It also criminalizes the “promotion of homosexuality” with up to 20 years in prison and mandates reporting of promotion,¹⁷ effectively censoring LGBTIQ+ issues completely, while preventing HRDs from defending rights. Since the law was passed, there have been 55 documented arrests under the AHA, three death penalty cases forwarded to the Director of Public Prosecutions, eight forced anal examination cases, and 254 evictions.¹⁸

8. The NGO (Amendment) Act (2024) further tightened restrictions on and centralized control over NGOs operating in Uganda.¹⁹ The NGO Bureau was assimilated into the Ministry of Internal Affairs, granting broad and discretionary powers over NGOs to this Ministry.²⁰ The Act amended the NGO Act Cap. 109 (2016), which required NGOs to register with and report activities to the government.²¹ NGOs that operate without a permit could face fines, prosecution and criminal penalties for directors of between four to eight years in prison.²² The Act allows for invasive monitoring, authorizing the Auditor General to conduct involuntary inspections and request “any information” that appears “necessary for purposes of giving effect to this Act.”²³ The law further prohibits NGOs from engaging in acts that are “prejudicial to the security and laws of Uganda” or “the interests of Uganda and the dignity of the people of Uganda.”²⁴
9. The POMA continues to act as a *de facto* ban on all peaceful assemblies through subjecting them to approval by authorities. Section 5 of POMA requires organizers to notify authorities of their intention to hold a public meeting. However, in practice, authorities interpret this as an authorization requirement and have often used it to prohibit the conduct of assemblies. On March 26, 2020, the Constitutional Court nullified Section 8 of the Act,²⁵ which allowed police to “reasonably” stop or disperse peaceful assemblies and was used broadly to arbitrarily prevent or stop public gatherings organized by opposition politicians.²⁶ But the rest of the law remains in effect despite calls for repealing POMA entirely.²⁷ The right to assemble peacefully remains a “police-controlled privilege.”²⁸ Authorities continue to wield POMA to break up peaceful protests, often arresting organizers for “disobedience of lawful orders” or “common nuisance.” In 2025, Chapter Four Uganda challenged the constitutionality of the remaining provisions in POMA.²⁹
10. On May 5, 2026, Parliament passed the Protection of Sovereignty Act, 2026, which imposes sweeping restrictions on organizations receiving foreign funding, with up to 20 years' imprisonment for each offense under the Act.³⁰ Offenses include the publication of statements against government policy and information deemed to “weaken or damage the economic system,” criminalized as “economic sabotage.”³¹ The Act adopts an expansive definition of “agent of a foreigner,”³² potentially reaching all civil society organizations and journalists contributing to international media.³³ Article 19 notes that the Act treats “ordinary civic engagement as a matter of national security concern.”³⁴ The vague provisions, such as criminalizing “disruptive activities,”³⁵ do not meet specificity requirements to make a valid criminal offence. The law imposes onerous new requirements on NGOs and grants the Minister of Internal Affairs with broad and discretionary power to

revoke NGO licenses.³⁶ The law implicates the same constitutional rights and international conventions that led to the annulment of the Computer Misuse Act (CMA).

III. Main Violations of Rights: Civic Space Repression

1. Uganda has made some progress repealing laws used to repress civil society but has fallen short of its commitments under international human rights law. This section analyzes violations of the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of expression and press, the right to political participation, and the right to life, liberty, and security of person with a focus on extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions.

Right to Freedom of Association and Peaceful Assembly

2. Article 22, ICCPR guarantees individuals the right to voluntarily form, join, and participate in groups, including trade unions and NGOs, to pursue common interests without state interference.³⁷ It covers both formal and informal associations and includes both positive (joining) and negative (not being compelled to join) rights. Article 21 protects the right to hold meetings, strikes, rallies, events or protests, both offline and online. Article 29(1) of the Ugandan Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, expression, movement, religion, assembly, and association, including the right to form political parties, NGOs, and trade unions.³⁸
3. At the 2022 UPR, Uganda only noted recommendations on protecting civic space, including ending the intimidation of HRDs, civil society organizations and journalists. The government continues to harass and restrict the activities of NGOs by suspending licenses, freezing bank accounts, raiding offices, and lodging trumped up charges on NGO leaders. These actions do not meet the conditions for limitation of the rights under Articles 21 and 22.³⁹
4. On May 9, 2022, the High Court of Uganda overturned the indefinite suspension of Chapter Four, calling it “irregular.”⁴⁰ The Ugandan government continues to routinely suspend licenses of NGOs on trumped up allegations and without properly notifying the NGOs. On January 9, 2026, in a striking failure of due process, the NGO Bureau suspended Chapter Four’s license, claiming the organization violated Article 42(d) of the NGO Act by conducting activities “prejudicial to the security and laws of Uganda”.⁴¹ ⁴² In letters sent to targeted organizations following their license suspensions, the NGO Bureau cited “intelligence information” and national security concerns to justify the suspensions.⁴³ A license suspension resulting from an alleged violation of the NGO Act requires written notice 30 days in advance.⁴⁴ Without official notification from the government, Chapter Four discovered the suspension when it was reported on the evening news.⁴⁵ The indefinite license suspensions of Chapter Four and the six other NGOs is counter to the NGO Act and to the holding in *Chapter Four Uganda v. National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organization*.⁴⁶ Chapter Four is currently challenging the new suspension in the High Court.

5. In addition to license suspensions, the Ministry of Internal Affairs routinely freezes NGO bank accounts. In January 2026, the Ministry froze Chapter Four's bank accounts ahead of the national election.⁴⁷ Various other organizations had their accounts frozen around the time of the election, including Agora Centre for Research, African Institute for Investigative Journalism, Centre for Constitutional Governance, and The Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies.⁴⁸ When Chapter Four faced similar actions in 2021, it secured a court order mandating the Ministry to reverse its frozen accounts and reinstate its license.⁴⁹ The current freeze and suspension are ongoing.
6. The government continues to raid offices. In September 2022, the offices of an LGBTIQ+ people's rights organization, Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), were raided by persons "who claimed to have come from the office of the Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social development."⁵⁰ The headquarters of the National Unity Platform (NUP), a leading opposition political party, was raided by armed security forces in January 2021 and again in February 2025.⁵¹ In December 2023, the offices of Students for Global Democracy Uganda (SGD) were broken into, leaving equipment vandalized and destroyed. It is suspected that government security agencies conducted the break-ins, as both incidents occurred when SGD was advocating for the release of a group of students and youth activists who had been arrested and jailed for supporting opposition politician Robert Ssentamu Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, in the 2021 presidential elections.⁵²
7. NGO leaders and volunteers are individually targeted. On December 30, 2025, Sarah Bireete, Election Monitor and Executive Director of the Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG), was arrested in her home and charged under the Data Protection and Privacy Act, Cap 97, for the alleged unlawful disclosure of personal data.⁵³ She was detained beyond the lawful 48 hour limit and was confined for a month behind bars.⁵⁴ Her bail was granted after the elections, preventing her from conducting her intended election integrity work.⁵⁵
8. On June 21, 2024, police arrested Mike Gesa Munabi, the founder and policy advisor for SGD on trumped up accusations of "inciting violence" under Section 120 of the Penal Code Act and "offensive communication" under the nullified Section 25 of the CMA.⁵⁶ The following day, Gesa Munabi was released on state bond but ordered to report to the police on a monthly basis, as his case hung in limbo between dismissal and prosecution.⁵⁷ Samuel Kayiwa and Johnbosco Mutyaba, two other members of SGD, have faced similar intimidation and harassment for their human rights work.⁵⁸
9. Individuals also face retribution for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. As of September 2024, at least 81 environmental rights defenders protesting against construction of East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) projects were arrested.⁵⁹ The court repeatedly rejected their bail requests.⁶⁰ The magistrate judge erroneously declared that the "alleged offence of criminal trespass was a serious offence," when trespass is considered minor offence under Section 302 of the Penal Code Act, Cap. 120.⁶¹ Detainees were held without access to lawyers or families. In response, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted Resolution 613, explicitly condemning arbitrary

arrests, incommunicado detentions, and denial of legal representation for human rights defenders.⁶²

Right to Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom

10. Article 19 of the ICCPR provides for the right to freedom of expression, includes the right to “receive and impart information and ideas.”⁶³ The African Charter reaffirms this right.⁶⁴ Despite these guarantees, restrictions of and attacks on civil society and the general public for exercising their right to freedom of expression have worsened in Uganda. The government applies repressive laws to criminalize disfavored online speech but not online harassment, particularly against activists and LGBTIQ+ people. According to the World Press Freedom Index, Uganda has regressed from 132nd out of 180 countries in 2022 to 143rd in 2026.⁶⁵
11. Article 29 of the Ugandan Constitution protects freedom of speech and expression, including press and media freedom. Article 41 protects citizens’ right to seek, receive, and impart information, subject only to specific security and privacy exceptions. Article 43 provides that the limitation on the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms must not be for political persecution, detention without trial or beyond what is “acceptable and demonstrably justifiable in a free and democratic society.”⁶⁶ The state has the burden to show that any limitation satisfies legality, necessity, proportionality, and least-restrictive means.⁶⁷

Attacks on Journalists

12. Journalists are targets of violence and harassment by public and private actors.⁶⁸ From 2022 to 2024, 326 incidents of human rights violations were reported against journalists, media practitioners, and media organizations, including 109 cases of restricted access, 70 assault cases, 54 arrest cases, and 34 damage to property cases.⁶⁹ On April 18, 2026, former newspaper journalist and author Joe Nam was killed by a masked individual outside his home in Kawanda.⁷⁰ The attacker entered Nam’s home and took only his mobile phone before fleeing the scene.⁷¹ The motive remains unknown, but the incident has left journalists in fear.⁷² In 2024, Nam published a book about President Museveni titled *The Day Museveni Goes*, covering issues related to political transition.⁷³ On April 19, local police opened a murder investigation.⁷⁴ The investigation is ongoing.⁷⁵
13. Violations and violence against journalists historically peak during election season, and the period under review was no exception. At least 13 journalists covering a March 2025 by-election in Kampala were harassed, assaulted or arrested while a local radio station was suspended.⁷⁶ Three months leading up to the January 2026 general election, at least five press members were attacked,⁷⁷ while an independent media outlet, Nation Media Group-Uganda (NMG Uganda), was barred from parliamentary and presidential coverage.⁷⁸
14. On April 21, 2026, police arrested journalist Frank Bwekumbule alongside two TikTokers, Frank Kaggwa and Joseph Kikaawa, later charging them with impersonating journalists.⁷⁹

Authorities claimed they intended to malign a local ruling party politician. Bwekumbule was held for several days while the TikTokers were detained until May 11, 2026.

15. On June 29, 2026 veteran journalist and political commentator Timothy Kalyegira was charged with operating two digital news outlets without a license and remanded to prison until July 16.⁸⁰
16. In June 2026, authorities shut down NMG Uganda, on the directive of General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Chief of Defence Forces of the Uganda People's Defence Force and the son of President Museveni.⁸¹ Access to the premises of the media outlet, which publishes the *Daily Monitor* newspaper, remained restricted amid a military siege and the company's managing director went into hiding following arrest threats.⁸²

Internet Blackouts

17. According to the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), Uganda has over 20 million digital service users relying on the internet for news and services.⁸³ Section 86 of the Uganda Communications Act requires strict conditions—e.g. a declared state of emergency under Article 110 of the Ugandan Constitution—to justify an internet shutdown.⁸⁴ Authorities bypass this process during elections by imposing restrictions under the guise of national security.⁸⁵ On January 13, 2026, two days before the presidential election, the UCC announced another internet shutdown.⁸⁶ The UCC ordered all mobile network operators and internet service providers to suspend public internet access, the sale and registration of new SIM cards, and outbound data roaming services to One Network Area countries.⁸⁷ It justified the blackout as necessary to curb misinformation and electoral fraud that could “affect public confidence and national security.”⁸⁸ No state of emergency was declared pursuant to Article 110 of the Constitution,⁸⁹ and the UCC's unsupported public order and national security justifications do not satisfy conditions for derogation under Article 19 or Article 43 ICCPR.⁹⁰ The internet was restored five days after the election.

Technology-facilitated Gender Based Violence

18. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TfGBV) in Uganda is a growing crisis. One in three women experiences online abuse, including cyber harassment, revenge porn, and blackmail.⁹¹ Over 75% of urban refugee women report experiencing online violence, often linked to physical, sexual, or emotional violence.⁹²
19. Women journalists are disproportionately targeted with online abuse.⁹³ Sexual harassment, stalking, and Non-Consensual Intimate Images (NCII) or ‘revenge porn’ are used to silence women HRDs and feminist activists.⁹⁴

LGBTIQ+ People's Rights

20. The AHA emboldens governmental and private actors to commit abuses, online and offline, against LGBTIQ+ people with impunity. Since the passing of the AHA, LGBTIQ+

people have faced an escalation of online blackmail, harassment, and threats of violence.⁹⁵ In November 2023, one peer educator and LGBTIQ+ activist received Facebook messages threatening to post his name and home address online unless he paid the blackmailer UGX 1 million (approximately 267 USD). Refusing to pay, the information was posted and the activist faced a slew of violent threats.⁹⁶

21. Threats online translate to violence offline.⁹⁷ Attackers often set up fake profiles on dating apps and social media platforms to trap and target LGBTIQ+ people.⁹⁸ The police have failed to investigate a string of break-ins into offices of NGOs providing services to LGBTIQ+ people. Instead, they have carried out mass arrests at LGBTIQ+ pride events, at LGBTIQ+ friendly bars, and at homeless shelters on spurious grounds.⁹⁹
22. The AHA criminalizes advocacy and allyship. LGBTIQ+ activists have censored themselves online to avoid retribution. The vague and sweeping “promoting homosexuality” provision chills expression and violates free expression. A TikTok comedian and hairdresser who responded to homophobic insults in her videos’ comment section was charged with “promoting homosexuality.”¹⁰⁰ Health care providers fear losing their licenses or facing criminal penalties under the provision for advertising their services to marginalized groups online.¹⁰¹ Simply providing housing for, or serving water to, an LGBTIQ+ person runs afoul of criminal law. Such extreme measures go beyond discrimination to criminalize the act of living. Thus, the AHA deprives thousands of Ugandans of the right to life.¹⁰²
23. A group of petitioners argued the AHA violates fundamental rights guaranteed by the Uganda Constitution, including the right to equality and freedom from discrimination, protection from inhuman and degrading treatment, and the rights to privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association. On April 3, 2024, the Uganda Constitutional Court upheld the AHA, holding that Uganda’s cultural values override individual rights. On July 11, 2024, petitioners filed an appeal in the Supreme Court.¹⁰³

Right to Political Participation

24. Article 25 ICCPR protects the ability to “freely choose[] representatives” and “to be elected at genuine periodic elections.”¹⁰⁴ Article 13 of the African Charter similarly ensures that “every citizen shall have the right of equal access to the public service of the country.”¹⁰⁵
25. Despite Uganda’s obligations under the African Charter and the ICCPR, it continues to stamp out the activities of NGOs, journalists, HRDs, and opposition leaders. Repression intensifies during election periods. Ahead of the 2026 election, the government ramped up harassment against civil society members and general members of the public connected to opposition leaders.¹⁰⁶
26. Opposition candidate, Bobi Wine has been a target since he entered the political arena in 2017.¹⁰⁷ During the 2021 presidential election, Wine was beaten, tear-gassed, and detained.¹⁰⁸ To preempt a procession of Wine’s supporters at the airport in 2023, Wine was dragged into a car by security forces and arrested upon disembarking from a flight at

Entebbe International Airport.¹⁰⁹ Wine was placed on house arrest.¹¹⁰ General Kainerugaba threatened to behead Wine in 2025 and threatened his life again after the January 2026 election.¹¹¹

27. Wine's 2026 presidential campaign was inhibited by government surveillance and intimidation. In January 2026, General Kainerugaba issued an ultimatum to Wine, giving him 48 hours to surrender to police or be treated as an outlaw.¹¹² Security forces blocked his rallies and arrested his supporters.¹¹³ Soldiers assaulted Wine's wife Barbie Kyagulanyi during a raid on their home, reportedly choking her, stripping off her top, and violently demanding she share Wine's whereabouts.¹¹⁴ She was later hospitalized. Fearing for his life following the presidential election, Wine went into hiding in Uganda.¹¹⁵ After nearly two months, he fled the country.¹¹⁶ The Uganda Police force unconvincingly claims it has no plans to arrest Wine when he returns to Uganda.¹¹⁷
28. On November 16, 2024,¹¹⁸ politician and opposition leader Kizza Besigye was abducted from Kenya and imprisoned on charges of treason.¹¹⁹ Charges allege Besigye held meetings in Geneva, Athens, Nairobi and Kampala to fund a paramilitary operation.¹²⁰ Besigye's health has deteriorated since his detention and his bail was denied at least four times.¹²¹ In February 2026, a church service to honor Besigye was cancelled on President Museveni's orders, who said the mass was political and had to be investigated.¹²²
29. On January 7, 2025, Eron Kiiza, Besigye's lawyer, was blocked by soldiers from entering the military court's section for defendants' lawyers when Besigye was arraigned.¹²³ Soldiers removed Kiiza from the courtroom, assaulted, and arrested him. Kiiza was convicted of "contempt of court" and sentenced to nine months imprisonment at Kitalya prison.¹²⁴ On April 4, 2025, the Criminal Division of the High Court of Uganda at Kampala granted Kiiza a 20-million Ugandan shillings (approximately 5,300 USD) bail on the condition that he surrender his passport.¹²⁵

Right to Life, Liberty, and Security of Person

30. ICCPR protects the right to life (Article 6) and right to liberty and security of person (Article 9). These articles prohibit extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrest and detention, require legal procedures for deprivation of liberty, and entitle detainees to a fair trial.
31. The government has engaged in a pattern of unlawful actions violating both Articles. Families report that authorities have not launched investigations into the deaths during the 2026 pre- and post-election violence, and the situation has not improved.¹²⁶

Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions, Torture, and Military Courts

32. Article 23 of Uganda's Constitution requires authorities to produce anyone accused of a crime in court within 48 hours and ensure the accused the right of access to a lawyer and their family and to receive any necessary medical attention.¹²⁷ Article 7 ICCPR prohibits

torture and other ill-treatment.¹²⁸ Uganda continues to detain citizens without due process or legal authority.¹²⁹

33. Detentions surge around national elections. During the 2021 elections, over 1,000 people were detained.¹³⁰ In early 2026, General Kainerugaba posted on the social media platform X that authorities detained over 2,000 opposition supporters, said they killed 30, and were “hunting for more.”¹³¹ There was no evidence the individuals under arrest committed a criminal offense punishable by jail, or that they were targeted for anything besides alleged involvement with the National Unity Platform (NUP). Nor were they brought to court within 48 hours, per ICCPR and constitutional requirements.
34. In December 2021, the U.S. Treasury imposed financial sanctions on Uganda’s chief of military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Abel Kandiho, for alleged human rights abuses.¹³² Kandiho cast aside the sanctions as politically motivated while denying the allegations.¹³³
35. NUP supporters are targets of arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment. In April 2026, 22-year-old Irene Nakibuuka reportedly died after detention and torture by government agents. In a TikTok video cited by local media, she reported being abducted by military forces in January 2026 for supporting the NUP.¹³⁴ Nakibuuka said she was discussing the election with a group of women when three of them were taken to an unknown place by masked officers, injected with unknown substances, made to spend nights in water, and kept naked.¹³⁵ In May 2025, Eddie Mutwe, Wine’s bodyguard, was detained and tortured by General Kainerugaba. Mutwe reported being arrested, detained in a private home, and thrown into a basement, where he was tortured and electrocuted by unidentified people. Kainerugaba later wrote on X that he had “captured Mutwe like a grasshopper” and was “using him as a punching bag.”¹³⁶
36. Muhammad Ssegrinya, an opposition member of parliament, died in January 2025 from a prolonged illness after spending two years in jail on terrorism charges without bail. Legislators believe his prolonged incarceration exacerbated his condition.¹³⁷
37. Political opponents and activists have been tried by military courts, in violation of Article 7 of the African Charter.¹³⁸ In June 2024, Ugandan environmental defender Stephen Kwikiriza was detained incommunicado by the military for his opposition to the East African Crude Oil Pipeline.¹³⁹ In October 2024, the General Court Martial sentenced 16 NUP supporters to five years in prison on charges of “treachery” and possession of explosive devices.¹⁴⁰
38. On January 31, 2025, the Supreme Court ruled that trying civilians in military courts is unconstitutional and ordered that all ongoing and pending civilian criminal trials immediately be transferred to ordinary courts.¹⁴¹ Some months later, President Museveni signed the Uganda Peoples’ Defense Forces (Amendment) Bill (UPDF Act), resuming the long-standing practice of trying civilians in military court.¹⁴² This has led to a standoff between the Supreme and Constitutional Courts given the former’s refusal to hear contempt of court arguments for their decision, and the Constitutional Court’s postponement of hearing petitions challenging the UPDF Act.¹⁴³

Enforced Disappearances

39. The Ugandan government continued abducting opposition leaders, activists, and other members of the public in the months before and after the 2026 election.
40. NUP supporters continue to be forcibly disappeared. On December 3, 2025, Roman Catholic priest, Father Deusdedit Ssekabira, was taken from his office by security forces for alleged “involvement in violent subversive activities against the state.”¹⁴⁴ President Museveni took responsibility for his enforced disappearance and refused to release him until he “confesse[d] the truth” of his involvement with Bobi Wine.¹⁴⁵ On December 23, 2025, Father Deusdedit was charged with money laundering and awaits trial. On February 10, 2026, he was granted bail after two months of unlawful detention.¹⁴⁶ In May 2025, lawyer Abed Nasser Mudiobole, known for his political activism in support of the NUP, was abducted by government agents while he was at a meeting with a client.¹⁴⁷ He was previously a candidate in parliamentary elections and ran again in 2026.¹⁴⁸ His family was informed of his abduction via an anonymous call and was unable to contact him or seek answers from the authorities.¹⁴⁹ Mudiobole is diabetic and was deprived of his medication during his abduction.¹⁵⁰
41. Political activist Sam Mugumya, affiliated with Besigye, was abducted from Mbarara in August 2025. His whereabouts remain unknown¹⁵¹ and lawyers filed a habeas petition.¹⁵² The court ordered the government to produce Mugumya, but the government filed an interrogatory denying Mugumya was in government custody.

Extrajudicial Killings

42. Uganda has continued to turn a blind eye to incidents of the police and military killing members of the public. Moreover, authorities deny killings happen at all.¹⁵³
43. Security forces have extrajudicially killed individuals, justified as anti-terrorism security operations.¹⁵⁴ In November 2021, Sheikh Mohammad Kirevu and other Ugandan Muslims were shot and killed by police in Nsangi, a township outside of Kampala. The police claimed they were targeting terrorists.¹⁵⁵
44. In January 2025, 23-year-old Ivan Sentongo was purchasing a snack in Buloba town in Central Uganda when three Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces soldiers approached and shot him.¹⁵⁶ Police claimed he was a robbery suspect caught to stop “guilty criminals.”¹⁵⁷ A week before Sentongo’s murder, four people suspected of robbery were killed by the police. Members of the security forces who perpetuated the killings avoided accountability.¹⁵⁸
45. During the elections between January 15 and 18, 2026, the Ugandan People’s Defence Forces and Uganda Police Force likely killed at least 16 people using unlawful force.¹⁵⁹ In one election night incident, military officers entered the home of opposition leader Mwanga Kivumbi in Butambala district and killed at least seven people gathered to process results

forms.¹⁶⁰ In Rubaga, 33-year-old Victoria Ndagire was shot in the back of the head while walking home after voting.¹⁶¹

IV. Recommendations

1. Repeal the AHA and enact measures that protect LGBTIQ+ people.
2. Repeal the provisions of POMA that enable undue restrictions on peaceful assembly.
3. Respect the right to freedom of association by ending arbitrary raids on CSO offices.
4. Restore NGO licenses and undertake comprehensive review of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' regulatory powers to align with international standards. Ensure notice before suspension and investigations based on clear justifications. Lift the indefinite suspensions of civil society organizations. Provide civil society organizations notice and a chance to be heard before any adverse actions are taken against them.
5. End internet blackouts and media shutdowns.
6. Initiate independent investigations into incidents of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.
7. Prosecute and hold accountable military officers and police responsible for extrajudicial killings.
8. Take steps to ensure families of the victims of enforced disappearances receive justice.
9. End the trial of civilians in military courts in accordance with the Ugandan Supreme Court's 2025 decision.
10. Investigate attacks on journalists and hold those responsible to account.
11. Establish an independent national mechanism for the safety of journalists, specifically tasked with monitoring threats and ensuring rapid-response protection for media workers.
12. Immediately and unconditionally release those who are arbitrarily detained, including Dr. Kizza Besigye.

¹ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Uganda*, UN Doc A/HRC/50/11, 4 April 2022; OHCHR, *Universal Periodic Review: Uganda*, Third Cycle documentation <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/ug-index>.

² Amnesty International, *Uganda: Oral Statement Item 6: Consideration of UPR reports: Uganda*, AFR 59/5709/2022, 1 July 2022 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/5709/2022/en/>.

³ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Dec. 16, 1966, S. Treaty Doc. No. 95-20, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, art. 6 (right to life); art. 7 (right to live free from torture); art. 9 (right to liberty and security); art. 19 (right to free expression); art. 22 (right to free association).

⁴ African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, June 27, 1981, O.A.U. Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), 1520 U.N.T.S. 217, art. 9 (guaranteeing the right to information and freedom of expression); art.19 (stating that "all peoples shall be equal; they shall enjoy the same respect and shall have the same rights. Nothing shall justify the domination of a people by another.").

⁵ The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, art. 29 ("Protection of freedom of conscience, expression, movement, religion, assembly and association").

⁶ Switzerland, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Uganda*, UN Doc. A/HRC/50/11 (2022), Recommendation 125.139.

⁷ Paul Kimumwe, *Media Regulation and Practice in Uganda: A Journalists Handbook* (2014), https://www.academia.edu/7413904/Media_Regulation_and_Practice_in_Uganda_A_Journalists_Handbook.

⁸ *Alternative Digitalk Ltd. v. Att'y Gen.* (Consolidated Constitutional Petitions Nos. 34, 37 & 42 of 2022) [2026] UGCC 3, 65-74 (Uganda Mar. 17, 2026).

⁹ *Id.* at 68.

¹⁰ *Uganda: Repeals vagrancy, sedition, and false news offences*, Southern Africa Litigation Centre (Jul. 11, 2023), <https://www.southernafricalitigationcentre.org/uganda-repeals-vagrancy-sedition-and-false-news-offences/>.

¹¹ Penal Code Act, Cap. 128 (rev. ed. 2000) (Ug.), <https://ulii.org/en/akn/ug/act/ord/1950/12/eng@2024-12-23>.

¹² *Onyango Obbo and Another v Attorney General* (Constitutional Appeal 2 of 2002) [2004] UGSC 44 (11 February 2004), <https://ulii.org/en/akn/ug/judgment/ugsc/2004/44/eng@2004-02-11>.

¹³ Penal Code Act, *supra* note 23.

¹⁴ *Uganda: Court fails to repeal callous anti-LGBTI law, puts people at risk*, Amnesty Int'l (Apr. 3, 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/uganda-court-fails-to-repeal-callous-anti-lgbti-law-puts-people-at-risk/>.

¹⁵ "Everybody here is having two lives or phones": The devastating impact of criminalization on digital spaces for LGBTQ people in Uganda, Amnesty Int'l (Oct. 23, 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/8571/2024/en/>.

¹⁶ The Anti-Homosexuality Act (2023) Cap. 117 (Uganda), <https://www.parliament.go.ug/sites/default/files/The%20Anti-Homosexuality%20Act%2C%202023.pdf>; *Human Rights Watch submission to the Uganda Parliament Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Bill*, Human Rights Watch (Mar. 17, 2023), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/03/17/human-rights-watch-submission-uganda-parliament-committee-legal-and-parliamentary>.

¹⁷ "Promotion" includes "operat[ing] an organisation which promotes or encourages homosexuality or the observance or normalisation of conduct prohibited under this Act," § 11(2)(e), "knowingly advertis[ing], publish[ing], print[ing], broadcast[ing], distribut[ing]. . . including the use of a computer, information system or the internet, of any material promoting or encouraging homosexuality or the commission of an offence under this Act," § 11(2)(b), [and] "allow[ing] another person to use any house, building or establishment for the purpose of undertaking activities that encourage homosexuality. . ." § 11(2)(d).

¹⁸ *Uganda: Court fails to repeal callous anti-LGBTI law, puts people at risk*, Amnesty Int'l (Apr. 3, 2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/04/uganda-court-fails-to-repeal-callous-anti-lgbti-law-puts-people-at-risk/>.

¹⁹ *Civic Freedom Monitor: Uganda*, Int'l Ctr. for Non-Profit Law, <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/uganda>.

²⁰ *Id.* According to Onyango & Company, the NGO Bureau was mainstreamed as a government department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, <https://onyangoadvocates.com/brief-on-the-non-governmental-organisations-act-2024>.

²¹ *A simplified guide to the NGO Act, 2016*, Chapter Four Uganda (Oct. 5, 2018), <https://chapterfouruganda.org/a-simplified-guide-to-the-ngo-act-2016/>; *Civic Freedom Monitor: Uganda*, *supra* note 32.

²² NGO (Amendment) Act (2024) (Uganda).

²³ *Civic Freedom Monitor: Uganda*, *supra* note 32.

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Human Rights Network Uganda & 4 Others v Attorney General*, Constitutional Appeal No. 11 of 2024.

²⁶ *Uganda: Constitutional Court nullifies law used to prohibit protests*, Amnesty Int'l (Mar. 27, 2020), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/03/uganda-constitutional-court-nullifies-law-used-to-prohibit-protests/>.

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²⁹ *Human Rights Network Uganda & 4 Others v Attorney General*, Constitutional Petition No. 56 of 2025, <https://chapterfouruganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/POMA-Judgment.pdf>.

³⁰ Protection of Sovereignty Bill (2026) Bill No. 13.

³¹ *Id.*; *Ugandan journalists face up to 20 years in jail under draconian foreign agents bill*, Comm. to Protect Journalists (Apr. 24, 2026), <https://cpj.org/2026/04/ugandan-journalists-face-up-to-20-years-in-jail-under-draconian-foreign-agents-bill/>; *Uganda: Protection of Sovereignty Bill 2026 threatens civic space*, Article 19 (Apr. 28, 2026), <https://www.article19.org/resources/uganda-protection-of-sovereignty-bill-2026-threatens-civic-space/>.

³² An “agent of a foreigner” includes any person “whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized by a foreigner.” Protection of Sovereignty Bill, *supra* note 46, at 3.

³³ *Uganda: Protection of Sovereignty Bill 2026 threatens civic space*, Article 19 (Apr. 28, 2026), <https://www.article19.org/resources/uganda-protection-of-sovereignty-bill-2026-threatens-civic-space/>.

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ Protection of Sovereignty Bill, *supra* note 46, at § 23.

³⁶ *Id.* § 26; § 28; § 20.

³⁷ *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders*, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/64/226 (Aug. 4, 2009), <https://docs.un.org/en/A/64/226>.

³⁸ Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, art. 29.

³⁹ Article 22 provides that “[n]o restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those which are prescribed by law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”

⁴⁰ Oryem Nyeko, *Court Ends Suspension of NGO in Uganda*, Human Rights Watch (May 24, 2022), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/05/24/court-ends-suspension-ngo-uganda>; AFP, *High Court orders govt to review suspension of Chapter Four*, The Monitor (May 10, 2022), <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/high-court-orders-govt-to-review-suspension-of-chapter-four-3810626>.

⁴¹ *Uganda: The Kennedy Human Rights Center Condemns the Suspension of Chapter Four Uganda Amidst Escalating Restrictions on Civic Space Ahead of January 15 Elections*, Robert & Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Ctr. (Jan. 12, 2026), <https://kennedyhumanrights.org/our-voices/uganda-the-kennedy-human-rights-center-condemns-the-suspension-of-chapter-four-uganda-amidst-escalating-restrictions-on-civic-space-ahead-of-january-15-elections/>.

⁴² The NGOs include: Alliance for Election Finance Monitoring (ACFIM), Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-U), the National NGO Forum, the Center for Constitutional Governance, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, and African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV). *Uganda: Suspension of at least seven human rights NGOs ahead of general elections*, Int’l Fed’n for Human Rights (Jan. 14, 2026), <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/uganda-suspension-of-at-least-seven-human-rights-ngos-ahead-of>.

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⁴⁴ NGO Act, § 33(2).

⁴⁵ *Chapter Four Uganda v. National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations* (Miscellaneous Cause No. 292 of 2021). For more information about Chapter Four’s 2021 legal challenge of its license suspension, see *Chapter Four Uganda v National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations*, Cases, Chapter Four Uganda (Sep. 16, 2025) <https://chapterfouruganda.org/cases/chapter-four-uganda-v-national-bureau-for-non-governmental-organizations/>.

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⁴⁷ Franklin Ezaruku Draku, *NGOs in tight corner after govt freezes accounts*, Monitor (Mar. 19, 2026), <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/ngos-in-tight-corner-after-govt-freezes-accounts-5396422#story>.

⁴⁸ *Press Release on the Suspension of Public Internet Access, Selected Mobile Services and Civil Society Organizations’ Permits during the Election Period in Uganda.*, African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Jan. 16, 2026),

<https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2026-01-16/press-release-suspension-public-internet-access-uganda>; Draku, *supra* note 65.

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⁵⁰ *Raid at SMUG Premises*, SMUG International - LGBTI Rights, Gay Rights, Gay Pride (Sept. 24, 2022), <https://smuginternational.org/smug-intl-blog/f/raid-at-smug-premises>.

⁵¹ *Uganda opposition says HQ raided as it readies election petition*, Al Jazeera (Jan. 18, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/1/18/uganda-opposition-says-its-offices-raided-amid-election-challenge>; Joyce Obure, *Uganda Opposition Claims Security Forces Raid NUP Headquarters, Steal Documents and Equipment*, Pearl Radio (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://pearlradio.co.ke/2025/02/25/uganda-opposition-claims-security-forces-raid-nup-headquarters-steal-documents-and-equipment/>.

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⁶⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, *supra* note 1, art. 19.

⁶⁸ *Uganda / Africa*, *supra* note 83.

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⁸⁸ U.C.C. Directive ECO/436 (Jan. 13, 2026), *supra* note 116.

⁸⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, art. 110(7) (“Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament shall enact such laws as may be necessary for enabling effective measures to be taken for dealing with any state of emergency that may be declared under this article.”); Uganda Communications Act (2013) § 86 (enabling the UCC to impose blockage on communications following a formal declaration of a state of emergency).

⁹⁰ Article 43 allows limits only where they do not go beyond what is “acceptable and demonstrably justifiable in a free and democratic society.” That creates a burden on the state to show legality, necessity, proportionality, rational connection, and least-restrictive means. Here, the UCC did not show a clear legal basis, public notice, defined scope, and procedural safeguards (failing legality). The UCC made generic claims about misinformation, electoral fraud, or incitement, not concrete, contemporaneous evidence of a specific threat (failing necessity). A nationwide blackout affecting browsing, email, messaging, social media, fibre, mobile broadband, satellite internet, roaming, and SIM services is a blunt instrument (failing proportionality). Given that the UCC included some technical exceptions, less restrictive alternatives were available. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, *supra* note 1, art. 19 (right to hold opinions), art. 43 (limitations on the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms).

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¹⁰⁰ “Everybody here is having two lives or phones”, *supra* note 29, at 27.

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

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