

Joint statement

Uganda: Civil society organisations decry deteriorating human rights situation ahead of Universal Periodic Review

September 8, 2026 – The Robert and Ethel Kennedy Human Rights Center (KHRC), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice, Amnesty International, and the Stanford Law School International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic have jointly made a submission to the fourth United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Uganda.

The submission highlights critical concerns regarding civic space, the accountability of security agencies, electoral freedoms, freedom of expression, and non-discrimination. It examines Uganda's failure to uphold its international human rights obligations, and offers actionable recommendations to remedy these violations.

Uganda's fourth UPR offers a critical opportunity to assess the implementation of its obligations under international human rights instruments, making it a pivotal moment for the protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

During the third UPR cycle in 2022, the Ugandan government refrained from accepting a range of recommendations to protect civic space and fundamental rights and freedoms, including recommendations to adapt laws restricting these freedoms to international standards and to combat impunity for attacks targeting journalists, human rights defenders, and political actors. These recommendations also included decriminalizing same-sex relationships and investigating unlawful use of force by security forces.

While Uganda has made some progress in repealing certain repressive laws, it has failed to meet most of its obligations under international human rights law.

Indeed, since the last UPR cycle, the human rights situation in Uganda has continued to deteriorate. This decline is characterized by attacks on civil society, the arrest of human rights defenders and journalists, the closure of media houses, the arbitrary arrest of political opposition, the trial of civilians in military courts, and torture or other ill-treatment. These developments reflect a systematic pattern of human rights violations, including infringements on the freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, as well as serious concerns regarding equality before the law and protection from torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment.

The Ugandan parliament has since enacted new laws or amended existing ones, many of which contain broad, vague, and repressive provisions. These include the Anti-Homosexuality Act Cap. 117, the NGO (Amendment) Act (2024), the Public Order Management Act Cap. 326, the Anti-Money Laundering Act Cap. 118, the Protection of Sovereignty Act (2026), among others. These laws restrict the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, specifically targeting the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, the right to freedom of expression and the press, the right to political

participation. LGBTIQ+ people, political opposition, human rights defenders, and civil society have greatly been affected by these laws.

Signed,

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Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice

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