



BUKEDI RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (BRUCI)

CIVIC SPACE IN UGANDA

Reporting Period: January to March 2024.

1. The current political context in Uganda.

In Uganda, the political landscape has not changed over years plus the government too. The politics of Uganda is a presidential republic, in which the President of Uganda is the head of state and the prime minister is the head of government business.

The policies regarding the three freedoms have not changed in Uganda. The non-state entities like terrorists for example the Lord's Resistance Army, and Allied Democratic Forces, and the ADF rebels in Congo have affected the work of the civic space in that area.

The political context in Uganda is narrowed since the control of all high-level governmental oppositions and decision-making position are all occupied by the ruling party officials who suppress the opposition leaders.

2. Incident of human rights violations.

Ugandan Court Upholds Anti-Homosexuality Act : Entrenches Discrimination, Enhances Risk of Anti-LGBT Violence

Uganda's Constitutional Court on April 3, 2024, upheld the abusive and radical provisions of the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act. The ruling further entrenches discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people, and makes them prone to more violence. The court did strike down sections that restricted healthcare access for LGBT people, criminalized renting premises to LGBT people, and created an obligation to report alleged acts of homosexuality.

Gay Ugandan refugees who fled from their country to neighboring Kenya, return after shopping for food in Nairobi, Kenya, June 11, 2020.



© 2020 Brian Inganga/AP
Photo

Cases of actual violence on the basis of sexual orientation/ gender identity.

There were 17 cases of actual violence against persons on the basis of their real or presumed SOGIE in February 2024, affecting 23 persons. This violence was perpetrated by unknown persons in 13 cases, family members in 2 cases, members of the general community 12 in 1 case and in 1 case, the perpetrators were bouncers at a bar. In all the 17 cases, physical assaults were involved and the victims sustained serious bodily injuries. Out of the 17 cases, 7 cases happened in Wakiso, 4 cases in Kampala, 4 cases in Isingiro (Nakivale Refugee Settlement) and 1 case each in Gulu and Mbarara districts. Report reference the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

Prominent Ugandan LGBT+ activist who was stabbed last week by unknown assailants told Tortoise he has fled the country as his life “isn’t guaranteed”.

Steven Kabuye has been an active campaigner against one of the world’s harshest anti-LGBT+ laws, which was signed into law last May by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. The Anti-Homosexuality Act imposes life imprisonment on anyone convicted of homosexual acts; criminalises the “promotion of homosexuality” and includes the death penalty in some cases.

A rights group has reported at least 300 human rights violations against suspected homosexuals since the law was introduced. In a graphic video posted to Kabuye’s social media, the 25 year-old can be seen writhing in pain on the ground with a deep laceration in his right arm and a knife stuck in his stomach.

According to a Ugandan police statement, Kabuye was left for dead by two unidentified individuals who jumped off a motorcycle and attacked him near the capital city of Kampala. Right now he is reported to be in a safer place nor disclosed to the public, healing from his wounds.

Uganda’s Representation in the Human rights spaces

The Chairperson Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), Miriam Wangadya, has revealed that they were unable to physically attend some key International meetings on Human Rights because there was no budgetary provisions for foreign travels. This sets Uganda back from not being able to get represented in such important forums.

Abuse of public funds.

Failing hospitals, potholes in the streets of Kampala, the capital of Uganda, these and other issues did feature in an online protest campaign that rattled government officials and others in this East African country where street protests are practically outlawed — and where corruption is widespread and often deadly.



The campaign has been trending on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, as

Ms Agather Atuhaire, a journalist and activist, has been part of the team championing the recent “Parliament exhibition” on social media. Photo/Courtesy

#UgandaParliamentExhibition. It relies on leaks of official documents and has been cast as an "exhibition" — in a sequence of postings — about controversial issues.

The latest posts, about Uganda's National Assembly, purport to reveal details about abuse of public resources, nepotism in staff recruitment and even collusion between civil servants and lawmakers on oversight committees.

The online protest movement has become significant for its ability to name and shame specific individuals before an attentive audience, said Marlon Agaba, head of the Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda watchdog. "In a country where civic space has been shrinking, citizens are finding alternative and innovative ways to express their displeasure in terms of how the country is being governed," he said. This campaign also shows the power that new media has in shaping discourses on governance. The #UgandaParliamentExhibition also cast a wide net, seeking evidence of wrongdoing among both government and opposition figures.

Reported threat to life of the activities part of the “Parliament exhibition” on social media

There has been threats to Dr. Ssentongo Spire’s life in this reporting period following the Corruption exhibitions on social media. He has been spearheading what he calls ‘exhibitions’ where he and other activists have been putting different government agencies, ministries, and departments to account, amid allegations of neglect of duty, corruption and mismanagement.

The Uganda Law Society (ULS) condemned threats allegedly directed against Dr Jim Spire Ssentongo and a group of social media activists who have been demanding accountability from leaders in Parliament.

The lawyers in a statement released at the weekend tasked the relevant authorities to investigate the source of the said threats.

“...We, therefore, condemn the threats and intimidation to silence citizens’ urge for accountability of the holders of public offices. We call for a swift investigation of the threats made and the bringing to book of the perpetrators,”

Adding: “In any democracy, citizens are entitled to demand accountability of their leadership and Uganda is no exception to this.”

Dr Ssentongo had on Tuesday last week taken to his X (formerly Twitter) account and claimed that because of his shining light on the accountability queries of Parliament, his life was in danger as his communication and movements were being monitored.

Dr Ssentongo's claims "It is unfortunate that this is how they respond to public demands for them to account to taxpayers/ citizens, whom they purport to represent. How we got to this level of impunity and abuse of citizens and how we get out of it should concern us all - regardless of political affiliation..." he said.

Dr Ssentongo has been spearheading what he calls 'exhibitions' where he and other activists have been putting different government agencies, ministries, and departments to account, amid allegations of neglect of duty, corruption and mismanagement.

The most recent is hashtag #UgandaParliamentExhibition, which shone light on alleged mismanagement in Parliament.

The Uganda police deploy- heavily in kampala following threats to protest.

https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/police-deploy-heavily-in-kampala-following-pr-NV_178315

3. Suggestions for addressing these violations.

- Advocate for a fair budgetary allocation to the Human rights Commission to be able to execute their mandate which includes representing Uganda to the international Human Rights spaces.
- Make relevant linkages with regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes
- Reprehend and amend the punishment approved in the anti LGBTQI+ act.
- Build alliances and bring all relevant stakeholders to the table
- Communicate with and keep influential decision makers informed about progress made, challenges and opportunities for further advancing the advocacy objective
- Grant the citizens a fair democracy process that does not involve threats to the opposition leaders
- Volunteer or donate to a global organization
- Sensitize the security groups for example the police, the army on how to handle the protestors by avoiding brutal handling
- Follow the rule of law and apply justice to those convicted and charged with violence other kid napping and applying torturing them.
- Grant the journalists their freedom to operate and do their work because they are the eyes and ears of the public.
- Use the national and regional courts of law to enforce human rights and hold the State accountable.