



BUKEDI RURAL AND URBAN COMMUNITY INITIATIVES (BRUCI)

CIVIC SPACE IN UGANDA

Reporting Period: January to March 2025.

1. Context of Uganda.

In Uganda, the political landscape has not changed over years plus the government too.

Politics of Uganda. Uganda is a presidential republic, in which the President 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, yes there are the non-state entities like terrorists for example the Lord's Resistance Army, and Allied Democratic Forces, (ADF) rebels in Congo. These have affected the work of the civic space because the areas affected cannot be accessed.

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. Incidents of human rights violations.

Arrest of Dr Col Kizza Besigye, president of Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).

The mysterious detention of Uganda's opposition leader Kizza Besigye while on a visit to Kenya in November 2024 sparked widespread condemnation.

Kizza Besigye was arrested by the unknown security agency while in Kenya and was handed over to the Ugandan army, the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) where he was detained without trial.

Besigye has been seeking release since his arrest in Nairobi on November 16, 2024, where he had travelled to attend the launch of a book by former Kenyan Justice Minister Martha Karua but he is still being denied.

His first attempt, earlier this year, was rejected by Justice Douglas Singiza (now chairperson of the Judicial Service Commission), who ruled that his habeas corpus application had been overtaken by events.

At the heart of that application was Dr Besigye's claim that he was being illegally detained at Luzira prison, especially after the Supreme Court judgment that barred the General Court Martial from trying civilians.

However, before Justice Singiza could rule on the matter, the state charged Besigye before the civilian court at Nakawa, effectively pre-empting the habeas corpus petition

However, this could also be the day he regains temporary freedom, with the High Court in Kampala set to rule on his bail application this morning. His political aide, Hajj Obeid Lutale, who was arrested alongside him, is also seeking release on bail.

Presiding over the matter is Justice Rosette Comfort Kania, who may grant or deny the application, or impose conditional release for the duo. Dr Besigye and Hajj Lutale are facing charges of treason and misprision of treason, both of which carry the maximum penalty of death by hanging upon conviction.



Figure1: Ugandan Army escorting Dr Col Kizza Besigye to court for trial

Death of a Member of Parliament of the opposition party – Muhammed Ssegirinya.

Kawempe North MP Muhammad Ssegirinya was pronounced dead on Jan. 09 at Lubaga Hospital, where he had been admitted.

Sadly, Ssegirinya's time as an MP was overshadowed by ongoing legal battles and multiple arrests that prevented him from fully enjoying the fruits of his hard-won political success.

In 2021, he was arrested on allegations of involvement in coordinated attacks that rocked the Greater Masaka region. Along with Makindye East MP Allan Ssewanyana and others, Ssegirinya faced charges of murder and attempted murder, though the charges were deemed to be trumped up and the case had yet to reach any conclusion at the time of his death.

However, many—particularly his supporters and fellow opposition politicians—believed the charges were politically motivated, aimed at silencing prominent opposition voices. Alongside Ssewanyana, Ssegirinya spent time in prison before being released on bail in February 2023 and starting on his medication till his last breath on January 9, 2025.



Figure2: Photo of the Late Hon. Muhammed Ssegirinya

Floods in Kampala and Uganda at large.

Intense rainfall has been affecting Kampala city area, the capital of Uganda since 26 March, causing floods that have resulted in casualties and damage.

According to media, as of 27 March, at least seven people died, including three children, in the Kampala capital, several homes have been destroyed or flooded and roads were closed mainly due to flooding of the Nsoke river.

Residents, seen draining water from their homes, criticized KCCA for failing to clean and expand drainage channels, which they believe could have mitigated the disaster.

Another major cause of these floods was attributed to the construction of infrastructure in drainage and swampy areas. Most of these investors do bribe the authorities in charge of inspection of sites of construction so that they may continue electing their infrastructure.



Figure3: Some areas of Kampala strongly affected by floods

Kawempe by-elections

After the passing away of Kawempe North Member of Parliament, Hon Muhammed Ssegirinya, by elections were to be held.

Campaigns started in early March. During campaigns security agents brutally attacked and arrested many supporters especially those of the opposition parties and brutally arrested several journalists with some sustaining injuries and others went missing following the arrests.

There were incidences of vote rigging by the ruling party. This was evidenced when the Leader of Opposition in Uganda – Hon Joel Ssenyonyi and other opposition leaders landed on a residential house in a fence where it was alleged that the opposition was ticking the vote ballots from.



Figure 4: Some of the unpeaceful situations during the Kawempe north by elections

3. Suggestions for addressing these violations.

- Volunteer or donate to a global organization
- Make relevant linkages with regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes.
- Use the national and regional courts of law to enforce human rights and hold the State accountable.
- Hold the Kampala City Council accountable for the floods and if possible, change the management for better functionality
- 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
- 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 kidnapping 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