



NEWSLETTER



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Insights from joint ACTV-UHRC efforts to assess detention conditions and advocate for humane treatment.
- A look back at the impactful events held across Uganda to mark the International Day in Support of Torture Victims.
- Updates on the crucial initiatives pushing for peaceful and human rights-compliant elections as 2026 approaches.



Prison monitoring

ACTV and the UHRC conducted an exchange visit in Sierra Leone.

Page.... 05



UN Day in Support of Torture Survivors: Commemorations in Uganda

The UN International Day in Support of Torture Survivors under the theme "Torture and violence free election."

Page.....07



Coalition Against Torture: Press Conference on Torture-Free Elections

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), which also serves as the chair of the Coalition Against Torture in Uganda (CAT), recently held a significant press conference condemning the escalating acts of torture and human rights violations across Uganda.

Page....04

Message from the Chief Executive Officer: Looking Back, Moving Forward



The Day serves as a solemn reminder and loud cry to both rights holders and duty bearers that the fight for human dignity is far from over.

Our Mental Health Department participated in the National Mental Health Conference organised by the Uganda Counseling Association in Kampala district.

We also, together with the Uganda Human Rights Commission, conducted an experience sharing visit to Sierra Leone in West Africa on preventive monitoring in prisons. Prison work is an essential component in our holistic care package and also informs our evidence based advocacy against torture.

The recent spike in election-related violence in Uganda, particularly around the Kawempe by-election, has been a significant concern. The documented cases of torture and brutality against civilians and journalists are a stark reminder of the fragile nature of peace and the need for constant vigilance. We are committed to not only treating the physical wounds but also the invisible wounds restoring hope and dignity of every person who walks through our doors.

As we look towards the 2026 General elections, our focus is on collaborating with State and Co-state actors to contribute to a peaceful election process, free from violence and Torture.

Looking ahead, we are currently in the process of developing our next five-year strategic plan (2026-2030), which will be guided by the lessons learned and emerging challenges of the political, environmental and financial context.

Thank you once again for your partnership. Together, we can build a world free from torture and violence.

Sincerely,

Samuel Herbert Nsubuga
Chief Executive Officer,
African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture
Victims (ACTV)

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

As we close the April to June 2025 Quarter, I wish to commend your unwavering dedication to our mission at The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV).

This quarter was marked by a joint commemoration of the UN International Day in Support of Torture Survivors on June 26th with Uganda Human Rights Commission and the Coalition Against Torture in Uganda membership in Kampala (Central Region), Amuru (Northern Region), Kotido (Karamoja Region) and Kasese (Rwenzori region).

Editor's Note: A Time for Reflection and Resilience

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the April-June 2025 edition of the ACTV Newsletter. I am delighted to share the stories of resilience, advocacy, and hope contained through these pages.

This quarter, we had two significant activities; commemorated the UN International Day in Support of Torture Survivors and conducted a bench-marking and experience sharing visit to Sierra Leone in West Africa.

Besides, Uganda's election processes have once again been marred by violence and torture reports and allegations, particularly surrounding the Kawempe by-election. The reports of torture and brutality against citizens are alarming and a stark reminder of the urgent need for support towards the physical and invisible wounds survivors present with.

This brings me to a topic that is particularly close to my heart: Mental Health and well-being. Recently, I had the opportunity to share my thoughts on this issue in the New Vision with an opinion piece titled "*Our minds matter too: Why mental health isn't a luxury.*" In it, I argued that mental well-being is not a privilege for the few but a fundamental human right for all. For survivors of torture, mental health care is not an optional add-on; it is a critical component of their rehabilitation and a key to their freedom from the trauma they have endured. It is a matter of dignity, justice, and humanity.

Therefore, as you read through this ACTV Newsletter, you will see our commitment to this principle in action. From our prison engagements aimed at preventing torture to our dedicated Mental Health programmes, networking and strategic partnerships with every initiative intended to restore hope and dignity.

Our dear readers, you too can be part of this vital torture free Uganda mission. Your support makes all of this possible.

Sincerely,

Brenda Mary Kemigisa
Editor, ACTV Newsletter



VISION

A World free from Torture



MISSION

To Advocate against Torture, Gender based Violence, other forms of violence and Provide holistic care to Survivors



CORE VALUES

- Team Work
- Professionalism
- Integrity
- Compassion



Elections Violence

To combat this, ACTV and CAT have outlined a clear plan of action. They will conduct six key interventions ahead of the 2026 elections, including:

1. Awareness sensitisations on torture and human rights for security agencies.
2. Dialogue engagements with community members on peaceful elections.
3. Advocacy meetings with political parties and relevant duty bearers.
4. Documentation of torture allegations to enable survivors to seek justice.
5. Providing treatment and rehabilitation for survivors of torture and violence.
6. Conducting mental health awareness sessions in communities.

Furthermore, ACTV calls upon other institutions to take specific actions. They urge all political actors to foster dialogue and tolerance, the Electoral Commission to develop guidelines for preventing election-related violence and torture and extensive voter education, security agencies to adhere to human rights standards, the Uganda Human Rights Commission to conduct extensive civic awareness, and journalists to be impartial and expose all acts of human rights violations with a trauma informed lens.



ACTV CEO, Head of Programs and Coalition Against Torture Members during a press conference on torture free election at ACTV head office in Kanyanya, Kampala, Uganda

A Call for Peaceful Elections: ACTV's Stance on Torture and Violence-Free 2026 General Elections

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) is taking a firm stand of preventive as opposed to responsive interventions against the alarming trend of election-related violence and torture in Uganda.

In a recent Press statement issued on May 29th, 2025, in collaboration with the Coalition Against Torture in Uganda (CAT), we convened a press conference to address the media, journalists, and the general public ahead of the 2026 general elections. The core message is a powerful call for peaceful elections and respect by both rights holders and duty bearers for the right to freedom from torture for all enshrined in Articles 24 and 44 (a) of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda as amended.

Drawing on the painful lessons from the past, including the recent Kawempe by-election on March 13th, 2025 number of survivors of election violence, including five journalists, who were registered and treated at the centre for severe injuries. ACTV projects a worrying increase in torture, brutality, and intimidation allegations for 2026. The projection is premised on the documented psychological impact of elections in 2021 where 71% of the documented presented with suffering from psychological effects ranging from mild to severe trauma, including PTSD, anxiety disorders, sexual dysfunction and suicidal ideation.

Recognising that "Our minds matter too," ACTV underscores that mental health is not a luxury but a critical component of rehabilitation for torture survivors. The organisation emphasises that addressing the cycle of violence requires a holistic approach that includes mental health awareness and support.



PRISON MONITORING

Experience-Sharing Initiative on Prison Reform in Sierra Leone

From March 30th to April 5th, 2025, ACTV and its partner UHRC visited Sierra Leone Prison Watch for a "South to South" experience-sharing visit focused on improving conditions in places of detention and advancing human rights, particularly regarding the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT). The initiative was funded by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and Danida and a virtual participation from one of ACTV's development partner Danish Instituted Against Torture (DIGNITY).

Both Prison Watch and ACTV have extensive experience in responsive and preventive interventions within their respective prison systems. The visit aimed to provide a platform for these organizations to learn and share from one another's experiences. A key focus was Sierra Leone's successful advocacy and ratification of OPCAT, a goal ACTV in Uganda has been working towards since 2015.



Group Photo for ACTV, UHRC and the Sierra Leone human rights commission

The visit led to several key activities which include Meetings and Discussions where the delegation engaged in extensive discussions at the Prison Watch offices in Freetown, reviewing the objectives of the visit and the program. The other initiative was organizational overviews where presentations were given by Isaac Ogwal, Program Manager for ACTV, and Ahmed S. Jalloh, Executive Director of Prison Watch Sierra Leone, outlining their mandates, scopes of work, challenges, and achievements.

Additionally, the team visited the Sierra Leone Correctional Service office, the Freetown Male Correctional Centre, and the Freetown Female ...

correctional Centre. They observed challenges such as overcrowding, prolonged legal processes, and limited human resources within the prisons.

Furthermore, they held a meeting with the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission (SLHRC) and the Human Rights Committee of the House of Parliament. The SLHRC acknowledged Prison Watch as a vital partner in human rights promotion, and the Parliamentary committee expressed gratitude for Prison Watch's work, emphasizing the need for continued collaboration.



A significant discussion point was Sierra Leone's experience in ratifying OPCAT and how Uganda could lobby more effectively for the same. Recommendations included collaborating with parliament for awareness, involving victims to speak up, and persistently advocating for the protocol.

The visit aimed to facilitate learning on improving detention conditions and developing a process plan for successful OPCAT ratification, as well as establishing networks for South-to-South collaboration in prison reform. The shared experiences and insights are expected to lead to improvements in human rights standards and best practices in both Uganda and Sierra Leone.

ACTV Mental Health Team Attends National Conference, Underscores Importance of Psycho-socialsupport

On May 27th and 28th, our Mental Health Department participated in the 4th National Mental Health Conference, organized by the Uganda Counseling Association at Hotel Africana in Kampala. The conference was held under the theme; "Building Resilient Communities: The Future of Mental Health in Uganda". The opening was presided over by Dr. Hafiswa Lukwata, the Assistant Commissioner for Health Services in charge of Mental Health and Control of Substance Use at the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Lukwata highlighted a critical concern: the impact of social media on mental well-being, particularly for children. She also emphasised that while the Ministry of Health is working to improve medicine availability, therapy and psycho-social support are often the crucial first line of treatment, a perspective that strongly aligns with ACTV's holistic approach to rehabilitation.

The conference, with its focus on creating stronger and more resilient communities through improved Mental Health Support, provided an invaluable platform for our team to engage with fellow....



ACTV team during the Mental health conference at Hotel African in Kampala



practitioners and reaffirm our commitment to this vital goal in Uganda. Dr. Lukwata's remarks resonated deeply with ACTV's mission, as we have long championed psycho-social support as an essential component of healing for survivors of torture and violence, contributing directly to the building of resilience within individuals and their communities. Our participation at this national forum not only strengthens our network but also reinforces the message that mental health care is not just a service but a human right and it is therefore an integral component for fostering resilient societies. We are proud to stand alongside our colleagues in the mental health community to advocate for greater awareness and access to care for all Ugandans.

ACTV Amplifies Voices for Mental Health During May Awareness Month



Throughout May, Mental Health Awareness Month, ACTV took to its online platforms to shed light on the critical importance of mental well-being for all. Using the hashtag **#MentalHealthAwarenessMonth**, our social media posts highlighted the organization's holistic approach to rehabilitation, emphasizing that psychological healing is just as vital as physical recovery for survivors of torture and violence.



UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF TORTURE SURVIVORS COMMEMORATION

National Public Dialogue: Towards a Torture and Violence-Free Election in Uganda

Kampala, Uganda – On June 26, 2025, in commemoration of the UN International Day in Support of Torture Survivors, the Coalition Against Torture in Uganda (CAT), chaired by The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) together with its partner, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), organised a jointly National Public Dialogue. The event was held at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala district under the theme: "A Torture and Violence Free Election For all, by All". It was attended by 130 participants, comprising 50 Female and 80 Male, from various sectors including civil society, diplomatic missions, and government agencies.

The annual commemoration on June 26th underscores the ongoing commitment to eradicating torture in Uganda. CAT, ACTV and UHRC have been pivotal in advocating for a torture and violence-free environment in Uganda. Their collaborative efforts have led to significant legislative milestones like; the successful enactment of the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act 2012 (now Cap.130) and the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Regulations 2017. Currently, there is a checklist on Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture which was developed by Criminal Investigations Directorate of Uganda Police Force, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and ACTV in 2023.

Highlights from the Dialogue

Welcoming Remarks: The Board Chairperson's representative for ACTV, Rev. Canon Musiwufu Magala, reaffirmed the institution's three decades of holistic care and advocating for torture survivors and promoting systemic reform.

He acknowledged the support from various parties and the presence of high-level guests and partners, drawing attention to critical issues faced by communities, especially refugees and forced migrants. The tireless efforts of Refugee Law Project in providing vital support and services were also recognised, accompanied by a call for stakeholders to engage in meaningful dialogue, share insights, and explore solutions to promote justice, dignity, and well-being for all.



The Chairperson of the Coalition Against Torture (CAT) who doubles as the Chief Executive Officer of The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) ushering in the ACTV Board member - Rev. Canon Musiwufu Magala



The Public Dialogue was attended by dignitaries from Civil Society, Diplomatic Missions, Coalition Against Torture members, Ministries, Departments and Agencies of State, including Security Agencies

Remarks by Mr. Gabriel Ochieng, Legal Officer, Refugee Law Project: Mr.

Ochieng offered a compelling reflection on the complex and often overlooked challenges faced by refugee communities in Uganda, particularly within the context of political instability and electoral cycles. He warned that electoral periods have the potential to radicalise vulnerable youth, increasing the risk of violence and subsequently contributing to the refugee crisis. Mr. Ochieng urged stakeholders to approach refugee support with heightened sensitivity, emphasizing the need for proper training of all actors—both state and non-state—who interface with displaced communities.

A critical point raised was the severe mental health burden among refugee populations, with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression being common due to the trauma of conflict, displacement, and statelessness. Alarming, he pointed out a rising incidence of suicide among refugee groups, often linked to reduced food assistance, poverty, and lack of psycho-social support. He underscored the urgent need for collective action, compassionate policy frameworks, and long-term strategies that center the dignity and rights of refugees.



Mr. Peter Omara Larex Representative, Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) giving an opening remark on behalf of the UHRC Chairperson

Opening Remarks by Mr. Peter Omara Larex, a Commissioner and Representative of the Chairperson of Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC): Speaking on behalf of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, Mr. Peter Omara Larex reaffirmed the Commission’s unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights, with a specific focus on advocating for torture-free communities across Uganda. He emphasised that the UHRC plays a critical role in monitoring government compliance with national, regional, and international human rights obligations, including the Convention Against Torture. Commemorating the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, he stated, is not only symbolic but serves as an urgent call to action to eliminate all forms of torture and ill-treatment in Uganda.

Mr. Omara highlighted the Commission’s priority to ensure a torture-free and violence-free electoral process ahead of the 2026 general elections. He stressed that this objective can only be achieved through multi-stakeholder collaboration, involving civil society organizations, the media, security institutions, and electoral bodies. He drew attention to deeply concerning reports of torture within detention facilities,

including harrowing accounts of young people suffering severe injuries on prison farms, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and accountability mechanisms within the criminal justice system. He advocated for survivors’ access to justice, rehabilitation, medical care, and psychosocial support , urging an end to impunity for perpetrators.

Mr. Omara concluded by renewing the Commission’s

pledge to say “No to Torture” and called upon all stakeholders to join hands in promoting a society grounded in respect, dignity, justice, and human rights for all.

Commissioner Omara Peter also called on Parliament and the Ministry of Justice to prioritize implementation of the Anti-Torture law and further capacity building for state agencies, acknowledging ACTV as a critical partner to UHRC in protection and prevention efforts.



Representatives from the Diplomatic community along with the Hon. commissioner from the Uganda Human Rights Commission

Keynote Address by Dr. Busingye Kabumba, Director, Human Rights and Peace Centre: Dr. Busingye Kabumba delivered a deeply reflective and intellectually grounded keynote address that examined Uganda’s historical, legal, and moral relationship with torture and human rights. He began by contextualising the significance of the commemoration, noting that the struggle against torture is part of Uganda’s broader battle with its “darker demons”—a reference to the country’s violent colonial past, constitutional contradictions, and enduring legacy of state-sanctioned and private violence.

Drawing on the works of scholars like Mahmood Mamdani, Dr. Kabumba explored how past constitutions permitted corporal punishment and other forms of institutionalized violence, contrasting this with the 1995 Constitution’s non-derogable prohibition of torture under Articles 24 and 44. He praised Uganda’s legal framework—including the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (PPTA) and the Human Rights Enforcement Act—for going beyond international standards by criminalizing torture by private individuals



Keynote Address by Dr. Busingye Kabumba – Director, Human Rights and Peace Centre

and establishing personal liability for violators. However, Dr. Kabumba warned of recent regressions, citing troubling statements by public officials that attempt to justify torture and the continued existence of “safe houses”. He challenged the impunity demonstrated by security figures, referencing threats made by high-ranking officials and questioning the erosion of judicial independence and institutional accountability.

He also raised concern about ongoing legal provisions that allow trials to continue even when evidence shows the accused was tortured—calling this a betrayal of the spirit of Uganda’s constitution and the promise of “never again”. The keynote focused on “Upholding Human Dignity: The Cost of Silence on Torture,” and he challenged the audience to go beyond dialogue to coordinated action and policy reform. He stressed the link between impunity, abuse of power, and cycles of electoral violence.



Gen. David Muhoozi, the State Minister for Internal Affairs was the Chief Guest representing the Minister of Internal Affairs, Maj. Gen. Kahinda Ottafire

Chief Guest Address by General David Muhoozi, State Minister for Internal Affairs: The Chief Guest, Gen. David Muhoozi, commended ACTV and UHRC for organising the national public dialogue and acknowledged the importance of commemorating the UN International Day in Support of Torture Survivors. He emphasised that the fight against torture requires a collective and multi-sectoral response. He noted that perpetrators of torture are not always state actors and that acts of inhuman or degrading treatment also occur in private settings. He called for a comprehensive approach that addresses all forms of torture—whether committed by public officials or private individuals—and stressed the need for public accountability, especially among those in positions of authority.

The Minister underscored the importance of mental health within security forces, suggesting that untreated psychological stress could lead to misconduct or abuse. He highlighted the value of strengthening wellness and counselling services for officers as a preventative measure. He also reminded participants that institution-building is a long-term process that requires collective effort, consistency, and public trust.

Despite existing challenges, he urged stakeholders to remain hopeful and committed to reform. Gen. David Muhoozi praised individuals such as Mr. Sewanyana and Dr. Busingye Kabumba for their dedication to justice and human rights, noting that communication plays a key role in shaping public attitudes toward violence and accountability.

He called for renewed commitment to justice and human dignity, urging Ugandans to work toward a future where torture is never normalized, and every survivor is respected and supported. Representing Hon. Maj. Gen. Kahinda Ottafire, Gen. David Muhoozi highlighted Government progress and reaffirmed Uganda’s obligation under international law to prevent torture. He commended ACTV’s work and called for constructive engagement between state agencies and civil society.



UN day panelists comprising Julius Mucunguzi of the Electoral Commission on the right, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana of FHRI in the middle and SP Cornelius Beyanga of the Uganda Police Force on the left side

Panel Discussion: "A Torture and Violence Free Election for All, by All"

Panel Composition:

- Board Chairperson Representative – Welcome Remarks
- Gabriel Ochieng – Legal Officer, Refuge Project – Remarks
- Commissioner Omara Peter Larex – Representative UHRC Chairperson– Opening Remarks
- Commissioner, Uganda Human Rights Commission – Opening Remarks
- Dr. Busingye Kabumba – Director, Human Rights & Peace Centre– Keynote Address
- General Muhoozi David – Chief Guest, State Minister for Internal Affairs representing Minister of Internal Affairs.
- Panelists:
 - Dr. Livingtone Sewanyana – Executive Director, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)
 - Mr. Julius Mucunguzi – Head of Public Relations and Spokesperson, Electoral Commission
 - SP Cornelius Beyanga – Directorate of Human Rights and Legal Services at the Uganda Police Force
 - Moderator – Mildred Pedun

The National Public Dialogue yielded several crucial recommendations aimed at strengthening Uganda’s electoral processes and safeguarding human rights. To enhance electoral integrity and legal compliance, the Electoral Commission is committed to continuously reviewing and updating its procedures. This will be complemented by intensified civic education and public awareness campaigns to empower citizens to report irregularities, alongside continuous sensitization of all stakeholders on their legal obligations.

The Electoral Commission reiterated its dedication to transparency and underscored the shared responsibility required to ensure the legitimacy of the electoral process. Furthermore, enhancing security and the rule of law necessitates stronger coordination between the Electoral Commission and the Uganda Police Force to guarantee the safety of voters and electoral staff. This involves promoting public trust in law enforcement through professional and impartial handling of electoral violence incidents and encouraging public cooperation, particularly in providing witness testimony for investigations.

In Focus: A Glimpse of Our Quarter's Work



Join the ACTV State-of-the-Art Rehabilitation Centre Fundraising Drive and help us build a beacon of hope and healing in Kampala!

Donate via

Banking Details:

The Account Name: The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation Of Torture Victims
Bank Name: Standard Chartered Bank Uganda Branch
Name: Speke Road
Account Number: 0102814523000
Currency: UGX

Mobile Banking Details:

Airtel Pay:
Line: (+256) 0709763723
Name: African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
Merchant Code: 4368027

Every contribution, no matter the size, brings us closer to making this essential vision a reality. You have the power to help us create a safe, healing environment where survivors can rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.



SUPPORT THE DREAM

You can contribute to this vital project by contacting us directly:

- Phone: +256 323301260 / +256 323301261 / 0800202791
- Email: actv@actvuganda.org
- Visit our office: P.O.Box 6108 Off Gayaza Rd, Kanyanya Rd, Block 207, Kampala, Uganda. (Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM)

Your generosity will directly impact the lives of torture survivors, helping them find healing, justice, and a path to a brighter future. Join us in building this essential center – a testament to compassion and resilience.