



AFRICAN CENTRE FOR TREATMENT
AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE
VICTIMS

ELECTIONS IN UGANDA

***(Oral Statement Presented before The African Commission on Human
and Peoples Rights at the 85TH Ordinary Session in Banjul - THE
GAMBIA)***

The Honourable Chairperson, the Commissioners of the ACHPR, State parties to the African Charter, NHRIs, NGOs, ladies and gentlemen, all protocol observed.

Introduction

While the Republic of Uganda will be heading to the polls from 12th January 2026 to 9th February 2026¹, in each election cycle, the right to access information, right to vote, right to freedom of expression, assembly and association are always put to test. The violation and abuse of these rights has exposed many to torture, ill treatment and its physical and psychological effects.

Statistics

¹ <https://ec.or.ug/roadmap>

Out of the 207 torture allegations received from 2015-2022², 71% of the survivors or victims suffered from psychological torture and presented with insomnia, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sexual dysfunction, Anxiety disorders, and suicidal ideations.³

Key challenges

- The Security agencies implicated as the highest perpetrators yet their duty is to protect, promote and respect rights.
- Non-Government Organisations which condemn the situation are often misunderstood as partisan or agents of imperialists.⁴
- Most media houses are owned by politicians which promotes biased reporting and information besides self censorship⁵.
- The right to access to information is affected due to internet shut downs⁶. Relatedly, this honourable Commission has advised against this conduct in Africa through the ACHPR resolution on Internet Shutdowns and Elections in Africa; Res. 580 (LXXVIII) issued in 2024.⁷
- Limited accountability and access to justice for persons alleging torture during elections continues to be reported by both the survivors and their political parties they associate or identify with.
- Limited funding is appropriated to voter education and civic education for the Electoral Commission and Uganda Human Rights Commission

² 2021 - 2022 (102 torture complaints were registered), 2015 (61 torture complaints were registered) and 2017 (44 torture complaints registered)

³ ACTV Annual reports and ACTV Policy Brief on elections 2021

⁴ https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/elections/govt-freezes-accounts-of-4-ngos-doing-poll-work-3216360#google_vignette

⁵ Uganda Media Coverage of the 2021 Elections, January Final report. (https://acme-ug.org/wp-content/uploads/Uganda-Media-Coverage-of-the-2021-Elections-DESIGNED-JANUARY-REPORT-_FINAL.pdf)

⁶ <https://africanlii.org/articles/2021-03-19/carmel-rickard/ugandas-internet-closure-during-elections-challenged-at-east-african-court-of-justice>

⁷ <https://achpr.au.int/en/adopted-resolutions/580-internet-shutdowns-elections-africa-achprres580-lxxvii>

respectively affects civic competence and empowerment to participate in the electoral process.

Key recommendations

Therefore, we also call upon this honourable commission to urge the Republic of Uganda to consider prioritising the following actions;

- The Electoral Commission and the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) should extensively be funded for a sustained voter education and civic education programme on the rights and duties of every citizen on elections⁸.
- Security agencies should refrain from partisan conduct during elections and implement the Public Order Management Act 2013 besides safeguarding public safety and national security interests within the ambit of Article 44(a) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.
- The security agencies should be seen to facilitate the enjoyment of the right to freedom of information, expression, assembly and association as opposed to regulating the right and freedom⁹.
- The Independent Electoral Commission should take lead in prevention of election related violence and torture by developing guidelines on peaceful elections in Uganda.
- Journalists and the media should be impartial to all and expose all acts of human rights violations and abuses investigated for relevant institutions to account and embrace the trauma informed approach in investigation and telling stories of torture victims and survivors.
- The General public to always use legal means to advocate for their rights, and respect each in order to avoid political violence.
- Political parties should institute mechanisms that promote political dialogue and tolerance during the electoral process and provide access to

⁸ Section 7 (2) and (3) of the UHRC Act Cap 24


⁹ Article 29 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as amended. See also, Hon. Muwanga Kivumbi V Attorney General, Constitutional Petition No.56 of 2013 on Section 32 (2) of the Police Act.

professional and timely documentation of survivors of torture and violence.

Conclusion

An open and pluralistic civic space that guarantees freedom of expression and opinion as well as freedom of assembly and association, is a prerequisite for making development and peace sustainable. Democracy includes tolerance and respect for different opinions by all parties involved. Therefore, human Rights, including the Right to Vote and the Right to Freedom from Torture are not privileges but inherent.

Thank you for your kind attention.



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