



For Immediate Release

23/06/2022

PRESS RELEASE ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF TORTURE VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) together with the Coalition Against Torture in Uganda (CAT) chaired by the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), and partners jointly issue this statement in commemoration of the International Day in Support of Victims/Survivors of Torture, which will fall on Sunday 26th June 2022.

This year's commemoration is special because it marks 35 years since the enactment of the Convention Against Torture in 1987 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is also 10 years since Uganda enacted an anti-torture law; the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act No.3 in September 2012.

The Government of Uganda demonstrated its will to fight torture way back in 1987 when it ratified the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) on 26 June 1987. This commitment was further shown by domesticating the CAT when the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture law was enacted in 2012 and more recently the Human Rights Enforcement Act in 2019.

Other mechanisms government put in place to prevent and punish torture include the incorporation of human rights in the training syllabi of security agencies; establishment of human rights departments and professional standard units in the structures of security agencies; mainstreaming human rights in the school curriculum and

integration of the Human Rights Based Approach into government planning and programming.

The Government has created a conducive atmosphere for other non-state actors to play their various roles in entrenching the respect and observance of human rights including the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

However, we note that allegations of torture continue to be made against state agents including the security officers and other public officials as well as private individuals. Torture has been reported to occur in homes, schools, offices, detention facilities, settlements and other spaces.

As we commemorate the UN Day In Support of Victims of Torture this year, under the theme: **“You too can be a victim; stand up against torture**, the Commission and its CAT partners have lined up a series of advocacy activities to complement government’s continuous efforts to combat the vice in Uganda. The following pre and post-main event activities will be carried out:

- 1. A joint UHRC-CAT UN Day Anti-Torture press release to all media houses and circulated on all our online media platforms on Thursday, 23rd June 2022**
- 2. An informative joint television talk show to specifically highlight the plight of refugees in the context of torture, on Friday, 24th June 2022 on NBS TV from 10:00am -11:00am. It will be supported by the Refugee Law Project.**
- 3. Four joint live radio talk shows on radio stations based in Gulu and Kitgum targeting audiences in Northern Uganda. The radio talk shows will be supported by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (Gulu Regional Office), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) and Penal Reform International.**
- 4. Joint Awareness radio spot messages aired on KFM Radio and Radio Simba targeting audiences in Kampala, Greater Kampala and Central regions; and Thembo FM targeting audiences in Northern Uganda. The activity is supported by Uganda Human Rights Commission and Penal Reform International.**
- 5. A Newspaper supplement on Refugees and Torture published on Monday, 27th June 2022 and supported by the Refugee Law Project. (RLP)**

- 6. A joint Public Dialogue in Gulu District on Tuesday, 28th June 2022 supported by the United Nations Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNOHCHR)**
- 7. Legal and psycho-socio camps on Wednesday 29th June 2022 in Gulu and another at Kayunga on Friday 1st July 2022 supported by Uganda Human Rights Commission and GIZ.**
- 8. A Medi-legal and psycho-socio camp on Thursday, 14th July 2022 at Old Kampala Primary School supported by Refugee Law Project.**
- 9. Joint online media campaign on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media platforms. The joint hashtag #AntiTortureLaw10 also in use. The digital campaign was supported by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U).**
- 10. E-Public Dialogue on NBS TV broadcast live on Sunday 26th June 2022 from 2:00pm to 4:00pm as the main commemoration event. The event is supported by the Uganda Human Rights Commission and the Germany Agency for International Cooperation in Uganda (GIZ)**
- 11. Live streaming of the D-day main event on the YouTube link: UHRC UGANDA**

The Commission and partners continue to applaud the positive steps so far taken by Government and other key stakeholders to address the occurrence of torture in Uganda. We also acknowledge the civic awareness creation efforts by Government and other stakeholders that have resulted in the increased reporting of violations to the various authorities by victims. We however recognize that a lot more needs to be done by all us in our various capacities to eliminate torture from our country and indeed the world. We therefore call for concerted efforts of all of us to fight torture from our midst.

In view of that, we make the following recommendations:

- Uganda should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT) 2006 to allow access to all places of detention in order to foster prevention of torture.
- Parliament should urgently pass the National Legal Aid Bill in order to guarantee legal aid services for torture victims and survivors; as well as the Witness Protection Bill of 2014.

- The general public is urged to report all acts of torture to the relevant institutions and to ensure professional documentation of their experience.
- The media is urged to continue identifying, exposing torture related cases in their news reports and referring them for specialised care and support.

The fight against torture remains a collective effort and involves a change in attitude, behaviour and perception of both State, non-State actors and individuals. Communities need to continuously be empowered to know and fulfil their duties and responsibilities. We urge all stakeholders, on this commemoration event, to take stock of the journey that we have walked in the fight against torture as a country and reflect on our aspirations for the future.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission and partners under the Coalition Against Torture (CAT) is grateful to the Government of Uganda and the development partners namely the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), United Nations Office for the High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNOHCHR), Penal Reform International (PRI), Refugee Law Project (RLP) and the Women Human Rights Defenders Network -Uganda (WHRDN-U), for the financial and technical support that has made this year's commemoration a reality.

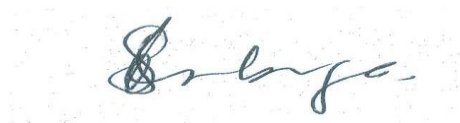
We wish you a fruitful and meaningful commemoration.

For God and My Country!



Mariam Wangadya

CHAIRPERSON, UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



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