



## **PRESS STATEMENT REGARDING THE SITUATION OF TORTURE, RESPONSE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN UGANDA- 2023**

Our colleagues from the media fraternity, I bring you greetings from The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV). Allow me take this opportunity to inform us that ACTV has made 30 years in existence since establishment in 1993. We will be commemorating this milestone under the theme: **“ACTV at 30, 30 years of rebuilding lives of torture survivors in Uganda”**. Any related information will be communicated to you in due course.

### **Introduction**

ACTV is a National Non-Government Organisation in Uganda with 30 years of offering rehabilitation to survivors of torture and advocating against torture with a vision of a world free from Torture and a mission to advocate against torture, gender-based violence and other forms of violence, and provide holistic care to survivors. Torture remains prevalent in Uganda and requires joint effort between state and non-state actors to address. We are currently implementing our strategic plan 2021-2025. From January 2021 to December 2023, we have managed to reach out to 3,199 victims and survivors of torture; 1,151 in 2021, 798 in 2022, 1,250 in 2023.

The above strategic plan is being implemented under 6 Strategic Pillars; Holistic Treatment and Rehabilitation, Advocacy for Torture Prevention, Research and Documentation, Livelihood Support, Legal Aid and Enhance Institutional Sustainability.

### **Our operating scope and context in 2023**

In 2023, our interventions were mainly spread in the following districts.

- **Northern Region** - Gulu, Amuru, Lira, Apac, Kitgum, Agago, Pader, Oyam, Kwanja Nwoya
- **Central Region** - Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Mityana, Masaka, Mpigi, Mubende, Gomba, Kayunga
- **Eastern Region** - Jinja, Luuka, Iganga, Kamuli, Mayuge
- **Karamoja Region** – Kaabong
- **Western Region** – Kasese

### **Key findings encountered during our interventions in 2023**

- **Survivors reached;**  
**In Kampala;** 394 (287 Male and 107 Female), **Gulu;** 593 (272 Male and 321 Female), **Kasese;** 28 (19 Male and 9 Female), and **Karamoja Sub Region;** 235 (192 Male and 43 Female).

**Reasons for torture reported or context;** Punishment, Forced confession (, disarmament process, Rebel atrocities, Election violence, GBV, Land wrangles, Extraction of information, intimidation and sowing fear.

❑ **ACTV's interventions in 2023 towards addressing the problem**

• **We provided treatment, legal aid and holistic rehabilitation at no cost**

• **Advocacy**

- Developed a checklist on documentation and investigation of torture; it is being disseminated for Utilization.
- Sensitization of the community has continued.
- Held engagement meetings to inform policy and practice with the UPDF, Uganda Police, Uganda Prisons Services, Ministry of Health specifically, the community health division – Department of Rehabilitation and Disability and Mental Health division on rehabilitation policy and standards.
- Pursued enactment of the witness protection law and been involved in consultation meetings convened by the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions as well as the Uganda Human Rights Commission in its annual consultative meetings with stakeholders.

❑ **Conducted capacity building for state actors; Health workers, CID Police and UPDF on effective documentation and investigation of torture related complaints.**

- 15 (09Male and 06Female) HRDs were trained on Stress, Anger management and selfcare in Gulu district.
- Sensitised 104 UPDF officers on Torture prevention and PPTA Kawuku battalion and Lugazi battalion.
- Empowered 10 state prosecutors and 10 police CIDs on proper investigation and documentation of torture in central Uganda.
- ACTV with UPF since December 2023 have now moved to train Criminal Intelligence officers from the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) since they deal with investigation and documentation on the Anti Torture Act 2012 including Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Regulations of 2017 and induction on the check list on effective investigation and documentation of torture which was developed jointly with the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (ODPP). In December 2023, we trained 83 CID officers from Police: 44 CID officers in of Kira division in Eastern Uganda from Jinja, Luuka, Kamuli and Iganga districts and 39; 11 Female, 28 Male CID officers from Northern region from Gulu, Amuru, Kitgum and Oyam districts.

- **Research**

- Prison assessment on the prevalence of torture and available rehabilitation services
- KAP study among police health workers on documentation of torture and utilization of the Istanbul protocol leading to a training of Police Health workers on 7-8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 this year in Kampala district.

- **Emerging issues which limited torture prevention in 2023**

- The ADF rebel attack in Kasese
- Violent Crackdown on demonstrations – Women Members of Parliament, Medical Interns
- Increasing land conflicts that result into acts of torture and ill-treatment
- Cattle rustling and attacks by warriors
- Bomb threats in Kampala
- Trafficking in persons
- Fear among survivors to report cases of torture
- Limitations in prosecution due to gaps in documentation, hence limiting accountability for torture.
- Limited knowledge and skills to effectively investigate and document cases of torture by the relevant stakeholders.
- Limited torture related complaints involving Uganda Police Force prosecuted in mainstream courts of law.
- Delayed compensation for survivors
- Limited funding for advocacy and rehabilitation work

- **Key recommendations to the Republic of Uganda regarding torture prevention, response and accountability**

- Parliament should consider prioritizing the enactment of a Witness protection law and National Legal Aid Bill to mitigate the lived experience of fear among rights holders to report torture and promote accessibility to justice and accountability by relevant institutions respectively.
- The Ministry of Health should consider developing rehabilitation standards and indicators for victims and survivors of torture and monitor their utilization across national health facilities since access to justice includes access to timely treatment and rehabilitation. There are already engagements taking place between ACTV and the Ministry of Health especially with the department on rehabilitation and mental health division.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs should consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture 2006 to foster prevention through unlimited access to places of detention which enables early detection of torture and timely intervention.

- The State should continue with the capacity building of security agencies, health workers and State prosecutors on effective investigation and documentation of torture to foster justice and accountability.
- The media should continue exposing acts of torture to relevant stakeholders in pursuance of accountability for abuses and violations of torture and cruel, inhumane, degrading treatment or punishment.
- The Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should continue demanding for accountability from duty bearers for violations and abuses documented but also continue providing support to victims and survivors of such abuses and violations. Effective documentation of complaints or allegations aids effective investigation and documentation.

**We wish you a Happy and productive 2024!**

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