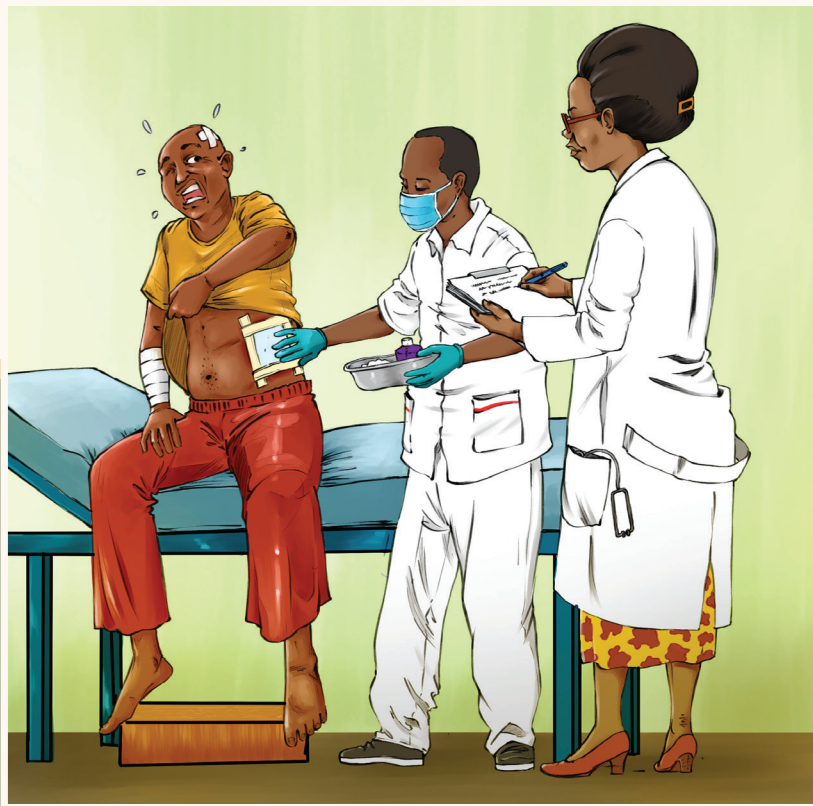


The Importance of Professional Documentation of Torture and Other Forms of Violence.

A Report on the Awareness Campaign about Documentation of
Torture Incidents during the 2021 General Elections in Uganda



AUGUST 2021



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About the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV)

African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) is a nongovernmental organisation focused on advocacy against torture, providing holistic treatment and rehabilitation services to survivors of torture. ACTV was established in 1993 and is accredited to the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). ACTV has a multi-disciplinary team comprising of Medical Doctors, Nurses, Lawyers, Social Workers, Psychologists and Physiotherapists who provide treatment and rehabilitation services including legal aid to survivor of torture.

Vision

A World free from torture.

Mission

To advocate against torture, gender-based violence and other forms of violence and provide holistic care to survivors.

Core Values

Teamwork

Integrity

Professionalism

Compassion

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACTV	African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
ANT	Alliance for National Transformation
CEDU	Centre for Election Democracy in Uganda
CP	Conservative Party
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DIGNITY	Danish Institute against Torture
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NUP	National Unit Platform
ODPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PPTA	Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act
UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission
UJA	Uganda Journalist Association
UNCAT	United Nations Convention against Torture
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
UPF	Uganda Police Force

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) acknowledges the support of DIGNITY, which enabled us to conduct this awareness campaign about the importance of documentation for survivors of violence during the 2021 general elections. Special thanks go to the survivors who accepted to share their experiences, the media for raising awareness, and local leaders that mobilised the communities. Furthermore, we acknowledge all the institutions that participated in an open dialogue and validation meeting of the findings from the documentation campaign. These included political parties: the National Resistance Movement (NRM), the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the Conservative Party (CP), Justice Forum (JEEMA), Alliance for National Transformation (ANT), the National Unit Platform (NUP), the Ecological Party, People's Progressive Party (PPP) and Uganda People's Congress (UPC). They also included government agencies: the Uganda Police Force (UPF), Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, the Electoral Commission, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the Uganda Human Rights Commission. Also included are civil society organisations: Citizens Coalition for Election Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU), the National Coalition for Human Rights Defenders (NCHRD), Uganda Journalist Association (UJA), and the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims (ACTV) conducted an awareness campaign about the importance of early documentation for survivors of torture and violence during the general election period from December 2020 to March 2021. The purpose of the campaign was to raise community awareness about the importance of professional documentation of torture, so that they could access rehabilitation services and justice. The campaign was conducted through the popularisation of a booklet on awareness of the importance of documentation that was developed by ACTV with support from the Danish Institute against Torture (DIGNITY). A total of 4,470 copies of the booklet were distributed in the districts of Kampala, Wakiso, Gulu, Lira and Masaka; radio and television message as well as social media were also used as channels in popularising the booklet.

With the increased awareness about the need to receive rehabilitation services and documentation for survivors of torture, several survivors of election violence and torture, survivors of election violence, community leaders, as well as media and civil society contacted ACTV for services. Further, as part of the campaign, ACTV conducted field visits to Masaka, Lira, Dokolo, Kwanja and Isingiro districts and documented cases of election violence there. A total of 69 (60 male and 9 female) survivors of election violence were received and their torture experience documented. Of these, 41 were documented during the field visits where ACTV went to document cases of election violence, and 28 survivors were documented at the ACTV Static Medical Centre. Of the 28 documented at the ACTV Centre, 4 obtained the information from the awareness booklet distributed, 12 were referred by partners and community leaders who had received the awareness booklet, and 12 had obtained the information through radio and TV spot messages. From the documentation process, it was found that these persons had faced torture and other related forms of election violence – which had caused individuals families, and communities serious mental health consequences as well as loss of livelihoods, and disrupted family and social well-being.

It is on the basis of these findings that ACTV makes these key recommendations:

- The government should set up mechanisms that prevent acts of torture and violence during elections.

- The government should investigate, document and prosecute all those that were alleged to have engaged in acts of torture during the 2021 general elections.
- The Ministry of Health should institute a comprehensive rehabilitation programme for survivors of torture and violence, especially that resulting from the elections.
- The general public should be made aware of the existing documentation and rehabilitation services, and should be supported to have their torture experiences documented, if they wished.

In conclusion, access to justice necessitates not only timely and effective documentation but also professional documentation. The value of awareness of evidence preservation needs to be underscored. It should further be noted that survivors suffer effects and access to rehabilitation services remains important. Further interventions that promote access to professional documentation need to be undertaken in order to increase access to rehabilitation and justice for survivors of torture. It is on the basis of this that this campaign is to be scaled up to include other districts of Uganda, and more community awareness be built to enable survivors of the 2021 general election violence to have their experiences documented, which could support access to justice and improve rehabilitation outcomes.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors (ACTV) conducted an awareness campaign on the importance of documentation for survivors of torture and violence during the 2021 general elections. The campaign ran from December 2020 to March 2021. The purpose of the campaign was to raise awareness in the general public about the value of having torture incidents documented by professionals so as to increase access to rehabilitation services and justice for survivors. This report will, therefore, present the structure of the awareness campaign on the documentation of survivors of election violence, findings of the documentation, and recommendations made to enhance mechanisms for torture prevention and effective support for survivors.

Elections come with a lot of pressure and are potentially violent in any political system. Despite the prohibition of torture in both international and national laws, torture remains one of the most violated human rights in Uganda, with the situation always worsening during the election periods.¹ According to Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) reports, there has been a steady increase in cases of torture since the year 2012 – 2017.^{2,3}

Although torture is criminalised in Uganda, little has been done to hold perpetrators accountable and minimal efforts have been made towards the provision of rehabilitation services to survivors. This is attributed to a number of factors but, most importantly, lack of evidence and ignorance of how and where to report cases of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, so as to access rehabilitation services and justice.⁴ In order to generate evidence in cases of torture, and improve on the outcomes of treatment and rehabilitation, proper and early professional documentation of the effects has to be conducted. Having professionals documenting a survivor's torture experiences and health consequences improves chances in the pursuit of justice – whether through going to court, creating political awareness of the problem, or having access to treatment and rehabilitation. Early

documentation is important as most of the time physical injuries quickly disappear, and the survivors' recollection of the events becomes poorer with time, which affects the quality of evidence. Therefore, documentation of physical injuries, psychological consequences and testimonies should preferably be done as soon as possible to ensure that the evidence is preserved.⁵

Through the various ACTV community engagements, community dialogues, medical outreach activities and community interface meetings, there were testimonies of limited awareness about the importance of early documentation of torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The same was found to be the case during the community perception surveys conducted by ACTV in 2016 and 2017 in different parts of Uganda.⁶ It was also noted that the survivors of torture we contacted had never had access to both rehabilitation services and justice, and that there was a need to raise awareness about the availability of these services.

It is against this background that ACTV, in partnership with DIGNITY, conducted an awareness campaign on the importance of documentation of survivors of torture during the general elections so as to increase access to rehabilitation services and justice.

Legal Framework on Torture and Ill-Treatment

Torture is prohibited in both international and national law. Uganda signed the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and was among the first State parties to be bound by its principles. Uganda is also a signatory to the African Charter, Article 5 of which prohibits torture.

The 1995 Constitution of Uganda in Articles 24 and 44 both prohibits torture and makes it a non-derogable right, respectively.⁷ Further, the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act 2012 (PPTA) criminalises torture and Section 2 defines torture in these terms:

Any act or omission, by which severe pain or suffering whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of any person whether a public official or other person acting in an official or private capacity for such purposes as - (a) obtaining information or a confession from the person or any other person; (b) punishing that person for an act he or she or any other person has committed, or is suspected of having committed or of planning to commit; or 5 Act 3 Prevention And Prohibition of Torture Act 2012 (c) intimidating or coercing the person or any other person to do, or to refrain from doing, any act.⁸

Torture affects an individual both physically and psychologically. The State, therefore, has a duty to not only treat but also rehabilitate survivors as provided for under Section 6 of the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act No.3 of 2012. Though the Istanbul Protocol is a non-binding document, international law obliges governments to investigate and document incidents of torture and other forms of ill-treatment and to punish those responsible in a comprehensive, effective, prompt and impartial manner. The Istanbul Protocol is a tool for doing this.⁹

The 2017 Regulations to the PPTA, 2012 in the same regard has documentation forms (Form 4) that provide for the content to be documented. This is to further the importance of documentation of torture and violence incidents.¹⁰

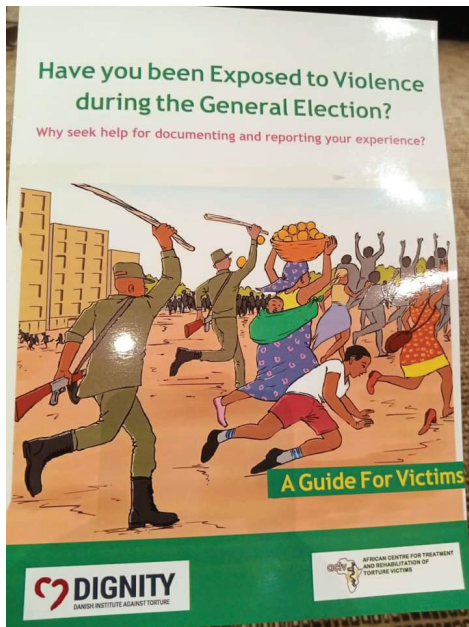
THE DESIGN OF THE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN, AND THE DOCUMENTATION PROCESS FOR SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCE

The Awareness Campaign

ACTV, together with DIGNITY, developed an awareness booklet on the importance of documentation entitled A Guide for Survivors, which was pre-tested in the communities of Kyebando and Kanyanya before it was distributed to 10 community members to seek their impression of it. All the 10 community members noted that the booklet was relevant and that it was simple and easily understandable, and they asked for it to be translated into local languages, which was subsequently done.

After verifying the relevance and validity of the awareness booklet, it was printed and distributed in different communities in 3 languages, i.e. English as well as 2 local languages (Luganda and Acholi) because the campaign was implemented in the Central and Northern regions, and these are the most widely spoken languages. Furthermore, focus group discussions during the dissemination of the booklets were conducted with market leaders, leaders of boda-boda riders, the police, political parties and peer support workers. In the focus group discussions, the participants acknowledged the importance of the awareness campaign, and pledged to refer survivors of torture. However, they expressed reservations about how survivors would be protected once they came up for documentation. Furthermore, the booklet was published in newspapers, i.e. Bukedde, New Vision and the Daily Monitor so as to have a wider reach, and through television adverts on NTV and Bukedde TV, and radio spot messages on Capital FM and CBS FM in Kampala (Central region) and Mega FM in Gulu (Northern region).

A social media campaign was also conducted on the ACTV Twitter platform in order to reach out to online users with information about the importance of documentation for survivors of torture and violence during elections.



Copy of the booklet



Newspaper advert

Table 1: Areas where the booklet was distributed

District	Number of booklets distributed
Kampala	1,850
Wakiso	1,600
Gulu	500
Masaka	20
Lira	500

The booklet was launched during an awareness meeting held with 27 journalists and media practitioners on 12 January 2021 at Protea Hotel Kampala Skyz. This was in the effort to ensure that the message on the importance of documentation reached survivors and to encourage them to have their cases documented by relevant professionals.



Launch of the booklet.



ACTV Head of Programmes answering questions from the media

The Documentation Process

Following the massive awareness conducted using the different platforms, 171 (89 male and 62 female) survivors of torture reached out to ACTV for rehabilitation services, and out of these, 69 cases (60 male and 09 female) who had suffered election violence were documented by the professionals at ACTV, and were provided with holistic rehabilitation services. Of those documented, 41 were documented during the field visits where ACTV went to document election-related cases, and 28 survivors were documented at the ACTV Static Medical Centre, and out of these, 4 obtained the information from the awareness booklet distributed, 12 were referred by partners and community leaders who had received the awareness booklet,

and 12 had obtained information through radio and TV spot messages. These sources of information about the documentation services are included in the ACTV screening tool which enabled the team to classify them.

Who conducted the documentation?

The documentation exercise was conducted by the ACTV team of professionals comprised of the legal officers, medical doctors, social workers, psychological counsellors, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officers of ACTV. These professionals carried out holistic assessments, i.e. physical, psychological, and socio-economic, to clearly understand the impact of torture on a person.

Documentation approach

The documentation was carried out during field visits and at the ACTV Medical Centre for those survivors that walked in after getting information from the various channels of the awareness process. It should be noted, though, that a number of survivors, especially those seen during field visits, declined to have their cases documented owing to fear of reprisal from their perpetrators. For example, in Makasa a contact person provided a list of 12 persons, and out these 2 accepted to be documented, 3 agreed to share their story but refused to have it documented, and 7 refused to talk to ACTV. The same happened with the 9 journalists tortured when the National Unit Platform (NUP) president was taking a petition to the United Nations High Office Commission for Human Rights (UNOHCHR). Though ACTV reached out to all of them, only 3 accepted to be documented.

Field visits were conducted to Mityana, Isingiro, Masaka, Dokolo, Lira and Kwanja following rampant allegations of torture in the media, and after getting invitations from some of the communities in those areas. During the field visits, engagements were held with different leaders in those communities, and these included local council leaders, area police leaders, and the office of the Uganda Human Rights Commission. The purpose of this was to get a better understanding of the events that happened in the areas as well as find out the local mechanisms available for supporting survivors of torture and violence in the community.

Documentation tools used

For each case of documentation, informed consent was obtained (i.e. before consenting to the questionnaire, participants were informed of the purpose of the documentation, the right to discontinue the documentation process and the aftercare services available at ACTV), and those who declined to consent were not documented. However, information about the available rehabilitation services was given to them for future reference in case they desired to access rehabilitation services. Interviews structured on the basis of the ACTV screening tool for survivors of torture and violence were conducted. Further professional assessments and examinations were carried out on each of the survivors following the Istanbul Protocol guidelines and findings were documented accordingly.

FINDINGS FROM THE DOCUMENTATION PROCESS

Demography of Survivors Documented

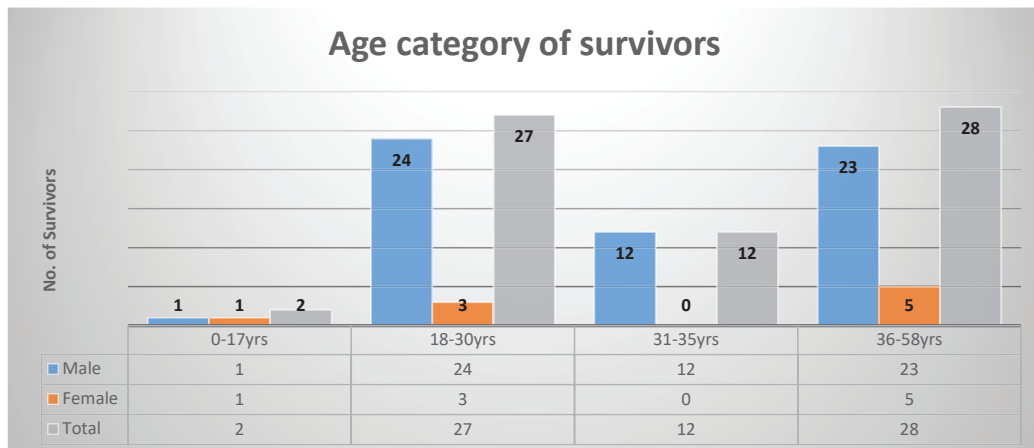
69 (60 male and 9 female) cases were documented from 11 districts, i.e. Mukono, Mityana, Kampala, Wakiso, Isingiro, Masaka, Buikwe, Kayunga, Lira, Dokolo and Kwanja. The demographic characteristics of the documented survivors included the number of survivors documented per district, the age category and the employment status.

Table 2: Total number of survivors of torture documented per district

DISTRICT	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Isingiro	12	04	16
Kampala	09	03	12
Mukono	10	00	10
Kwanja	09	00	09
Lira	06	00	06
Mityana	05	00	05
Wakiso	02	02	04
Dokolo	03	00	03
Masaka	02	00	02
Buikwe	01	00	01
Kayunga	01	00	01
Total	60	09	69

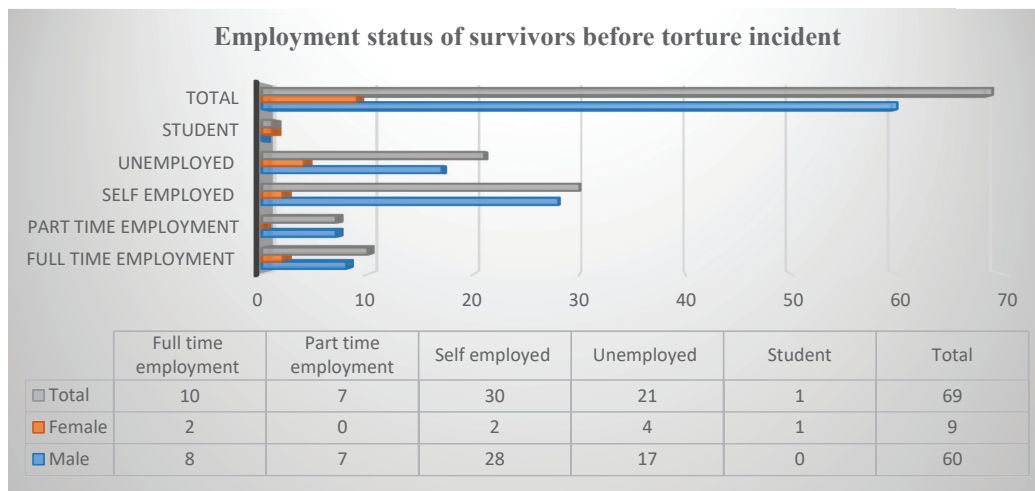
As the table above shows, the majority of the persons documented were male (60), who accounted for 87%. It could be seen during the election campaign rallies that it was mostly men who actively participated and this may have put them at risk of election violence. Isingiro had the biggest number of survivors of election violence, followed by Kampala, as can be seen from the table.

Figure 1: Age category of survivors of torture



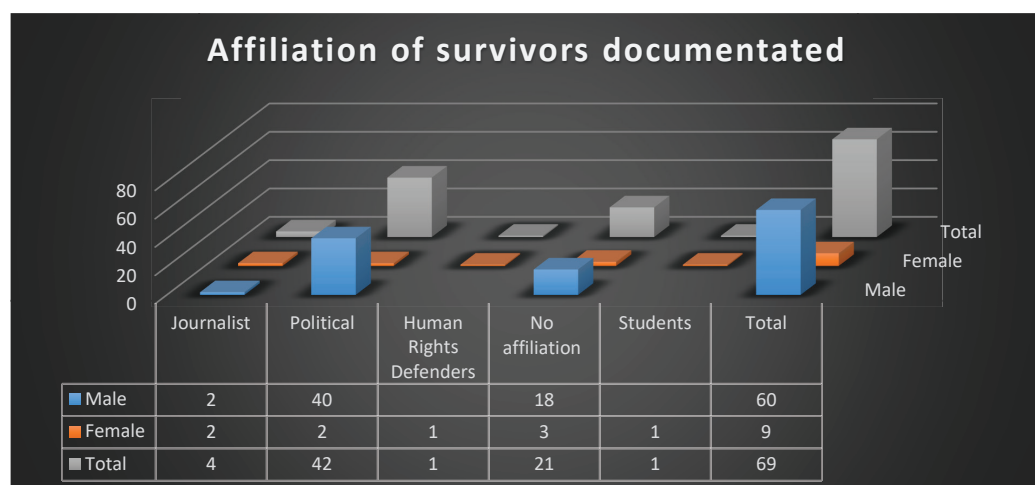
The age composition of the survivors of torture documented was categorised in four age brackets (0 -17, 18-30, 31-35, 36-58). The youths in the category of 18–30 and 31–35 year were 39, accounting for 57%, and this is attributed to the fact that these were the most active persons during the election period and were, therefore, susceptible to election violence. It is important to note that the children that were documented as secondary survivors were those affected by the torture that might have been meted out to their parents or caregivers.

Figure 2: Employment status of survivors of torture



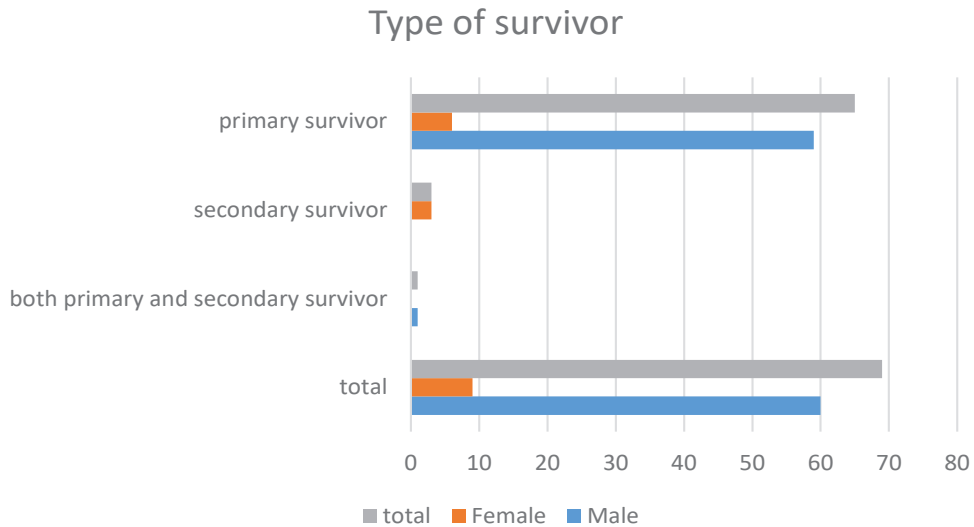
The graph reflects the employment status of the persons that were documented. The self-employed (28) and unemployed (17) categories registered the highest numbers of survivors. It was observed that during the election period, a high number of unemployed youth were engaged in the various political activities, i.e. rallies that were conducted across the country. This, therefore, exposed them to a high risk of being subjected to torture as a result of political violence.

Figure 3: Affiliation of survivors of torture



According to the graph, the majority of the persons (42) documented were subjected to torture because of their political affiliation. During the election period, a lot of election violence was portrayed by the media. This was as a result of affiliation to the different presidential candidates, which sparked feelings of anger between supporters of the different presidential candidates, and which resulted in acts of torture. The second largest category (21) were the persons tortured who had no political affiliation; these were tortured as a result of the violence that would erupt owing to the ongoing political activities, i.e. campaigns and rallies. A case in point are the 4 journalists documented; these were highly vulnerable and prone to torture owing to the nature of their jobs that involved working in violence-stricken areas.

Figure 4: Types of survivors of torture



The majority of the persons (65) documented were primary survivors of torture. The males (59) were the most affected because, as observed during the election period, these were the most active, which exposed them to a high risk of torture. However, secondary survivors were also documented, and these were mainly comprised of the children who were affected by the torture that might have been meted out to their parents or caregivers. There was also one male child who suffered both primary and secondary torture; this child witnessed the violent arrest of his father, and in the process he was also beaten.

Methods and forms of torture and violence used against the documented survivors

During the time of documentation of survivors' experiences, 90% (62) of the survivors reported having experienced physical torture. The physical torture method most survivors reported was blunt trauma, under which fall beating, kicking and slapping (telephone slapping, which involves slapping both ears). There were survivors who had suffered gunshots, nail plucking, exposure to burns, being tied and fixed in stressful positions, and exposure to poor conditions of detention (lack of hygiene, overcrowding and lack of toilet facilities), among others.

Some allegations of physical violence also included sexual torture methods, for example genital manipulation, forced nakedness, and sexual violence.

Table 3: Physical forms of torture among survivors documented

Physical methods of torture	No. of survivors who reported the physical methods of torture
Blunt trauma (beatings, kicking and slapping)	40
Positional torture (tied in stressful position)	7
Burns	2
Asphyxiation	3
Crush injuries	2
Genital manipulation	2
Penetrating injuries (gunshots)	3
Nail plucking	2
Chemical exposure (teargas)	2
Sexual violence	2
Medical amputation of limbs	1
Poor conditions of detention (overcrowding, lack of hygiene, and lack of toilet facilities)	8
Total	74* (*Some of the survivors reported being exposed to more than one method of physical torture)

There were also survivors who alleged that they were subjected to forms of psychological torture. The common forms reported were being held incommunicado for days, blindfolding, continuous threats and intimidation, denial of sleep, public humiliation, being put in solitary confinement, behavioural coercion (being forced to perform taboos, forced to commit violence against another person) and loss of loved ones. All these caused a lot of psychological distress among the survivors.

Table 4: Psychological forms of torture among survivors documented

Psychological methods of torture	Number of survivors who reported the psychological methods of torture
Solitary confinement	7
Humiliation	6
Denial of sleep	6
Denial of visitors or communication	7
Threats	9
Psychological techniques	7
Behavioural coercion	4
Witnessing torture of others	4
Kidnap of family member	1
Witnessing dead bodies	2
Total	53* (*Some of the survivors reported being exposed to more than one method of psychological torture)

As also explained in the tables, it was noted that many of the survivors suffered more than one form of torture method. As one of the survivors narrated:

During my torture I was told to lie down and beaten fifteen strokes on the buttocks so as to accept the allegations made. When I refused to accept, I was hit with a stick on the back by a soldier while the other got hold of my testicles and pressed hard. I screamed but he covered my mouth with his palm and I was immediately blindfolded. I was then hit with a gun butt to my head then picked up and taken to a pick-up vehicle where the fold was removed and I was driven away.

Perpetrators of Torture Reported

Below is a table indicating the perpetrators of acts of election-related torture and violence as mentioned by the survivors ACTV interacted with during the campaign.

Table 5: Perpetrators as reported by the survivors documented

Perpetrators of torture and violence (as stated by the survivors)			
	Male	Female	Total
Uganda Police Force	17	2	19
Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF)	15	1	16
Private individuals	11	4	15
Political candidates	9	0	9
Special Forces Command (SFC)	5	0	5
Military Police	3	2	5
Armed men in plain uniform	3	1	4
Local council leader	3	0	3
Special Police Constables (SPCs)	3	0	3
Local Defence Units (LDU)	2	0	2
Unarmed men in plain clothes	1	0	1
Total	72	10	82

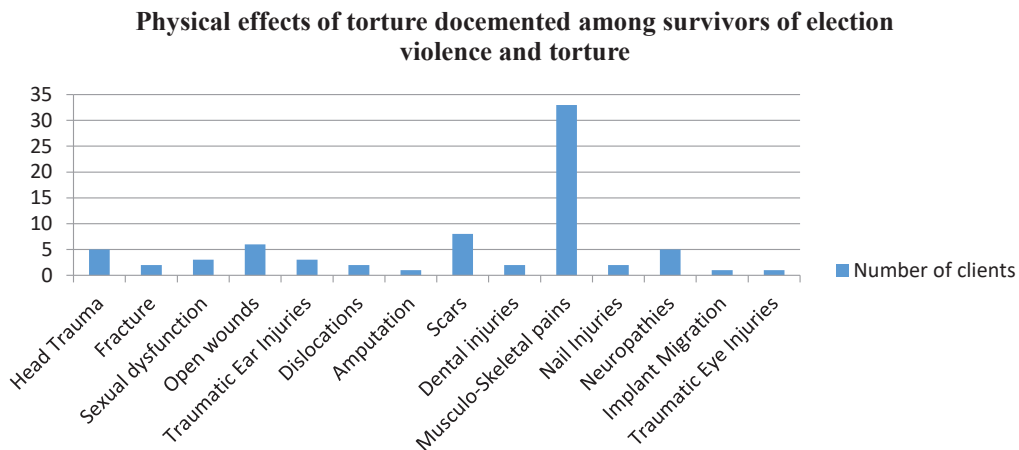
Security agencies were the most widely alleged perpetrators, with the Uganda Police Force ranking first with 19 persons (23%), Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) second with 16 (20%); and others were the Local Defence Units (LDU), SPCs, SFC and the Military Police. It should be noted that there was also a high number of private persons (11), at 13%, who allegedly engaged in election violence; these were mainly supporters of different political groups. Political candidates were equally singled out as one of the groups that directly engaged in election violence and torture of persons. It should be noted that there were some survivors who were tortured by more than one group of people.

Effects of Torture as Documented among Survivors

Physical effects of torture

A number of physical injuries were registered among the survivors that were documented during the medical assessment and examination. It should be noted that the majority of the survivors were examined after a period of less than one month, and most of the visible acute injuries had resolved. However, notwithstanding the resolution of some of the acute symptoms, survivors still presented with a number of physical effects, as illustrated below.

Figure 5: Physical effects of torture documented among survivors



It was noted that the majority of survivors presented with musculo-skeletal pain in the form of back pain, and pain of both upper and lower limbs. Musculo-skeletal pain or aches are usually as a result of repeated beatings, suspension, tying or sleeping on the floor, and manual work in places of detention which are, in most cases, filled with filth and unhygienic. In the physical assessment of the survivors, it was found that beating (which was the commonest method used) turned out to be the commonest cause of post-torture musculo-skeletal pains. One of the survivors narrated his ordeal thus:

I was arrested by armed men who were dressed in uniform of the counter-terrorism police who blindfolded me, took me to an isolated place, stripped me naked and started beating me unsystematically using batons and gun butts and am currently experiencing general body pains which I believe is because of the beating I was subjected to.

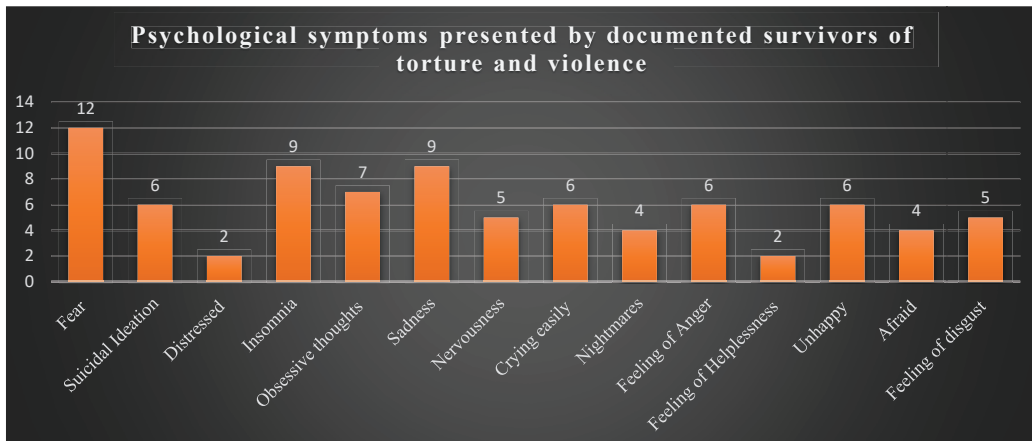
There was also a big number of survivors that presented with chest pain and abdominal pain, all related to traumatic beating. Further, some survivors who had spent a long time in prison, and others who had been tortured a month and earlier at the time of documentation, had developed scars resulting from lesions and wounds that they had suffered during the torture.

In addition, some survivors presented with very severe effects of torture. For instance, one survivor had an amputated limb resulting from a burn by a teargas canister. Others had fractures as a result of continued beating and kicking, dislocations, dental injuries (broken teeth), traumatic injuries to the ears with suspected eardrum perforations, which was in line with allegations of having been slapped on both ears at the same time, and sexual dysfunction in the form of erectile dysfunction, which was reported by those who alleged genital manipulation.

Psychological effects

During the psychological assessment that was conducted on the 69 survivors of torture that were documented using the ACTV mental health eligibility screening tool and the ACTV mental health intake tool, 16 survivors presented with psychological effects of torture that ranged from mild to severe symptoms. The severe symptoms had resulted in major mental health illnesses such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Figure 6: Psychological symptoms presented by the documented survivors of torture



As seen from the graphical representation, fear ranks highest, followed by insomnia, sadness, feelings of anger, unhappiness, helplessness, suicidal thoughts, distress and others. Survivors reported having been experiencing more than one of the symptoms at the time. All these symptoms relate to individuals who have gone through a traumatic event and are characteristic of psychological effects experienced by survivors of torture and violence. It was noted that none of the survivors with psychological symptoms had received psychological counselling.

The survivors that shared their stories made comments that depicted psychological challenges such as:

"I fear that anytime they can come back and beat me up again," said one survivor.

"Abantu bakyalina okutya, bino bintu sibyangu", literally meaning ... "People are still in fear, these things are not easy."

"I feel angry most times, why they had to do this to me?"

"I feel so unhappy. How do people look at me now in my community as a leader whose rights have been violated?"

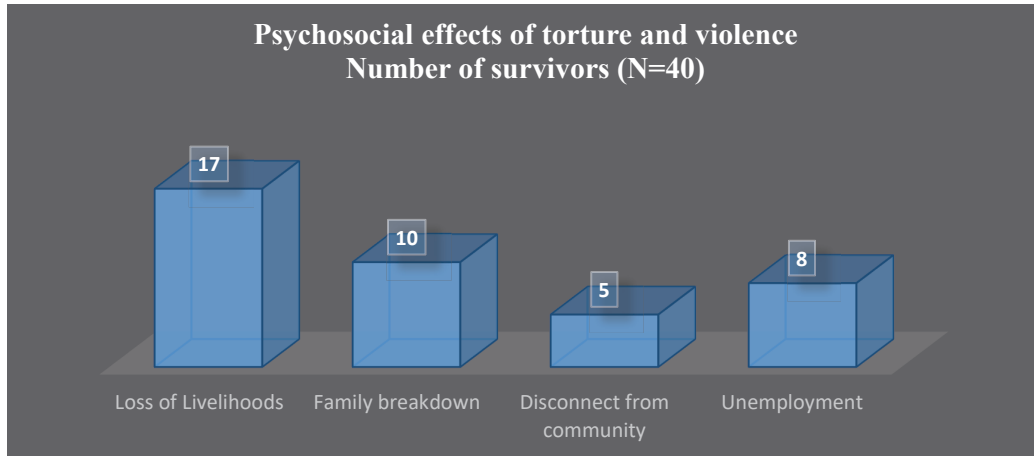
"When I sleep, I dream about how I was roughly arrested and beaten up by those men. I wake up shouting and fail to sleep again."

Another survivor stated: "It was in January 2021. I was walking along a football pitch where I usually practise from, and four policemen approached me and forcefully arrested me, saying I was idle and disorderly. I tried to explain to them but they could not listen to me. I was beaten with batons and kicked. I was then thrown into a car and taken to police. At the police station I was severely beaten by over six policemen, all saying that I was among People Power supporters who were burning tyres on the road. Now my whole body hurts. I can no longer work or participate in football where I used to get money. I feel so angry about this, helpless and frustrated. I get nightmares every other night and I cannot sleep well. I receive threats on my life from unknown calls. I had to shift from where I was staying. I feel so unsafe."

A survivor explained her ordeal thus: "I have received numerous threats and intimidation from the young boys around my village that if I don't vote Bobi Wine, they will cut off my breasts. I live in fear, I stay in the house most of the time. I am a single mother and I have to work for my children. I don't sleep at night, thinking that one day those boys will break into my house and kill us. One day I was moving to the nearby shop, and two boys pointed at me saying, *'Mwemutusibyeko omusajja, naye mujja kulaba ekinabatukako.'* I really don't know what to do."

Psychosocial effects of torture

During the documentation process for survivors of election violence, 32 (30 male and 2 female) survivors of torture and violence were interacted with and documented on the psychosocial effects of torture and violence. It was observed that survivors of torture suffered more than one social effect.

Figure 7: The psychosocial effects of torture and violence

Life of survivors before torture and violence events

Most of the survivors reported that they had jobs and work before the torture incident. Some survivors had their own businesses, some were employed, and some were farmers (crop growing, animal rearing and poultry keeping). Some survivors had their own homes and others were in a better financial position to pay rent for good houses to stay in with their families.

Life of the survivors after the torture and violence events

The survivors documented were found to be suffering from the psychosocial effects of torture. These effects were grouped into four categories, i.e. loss of livelihoods, family breakdown, disconnection from community and unemployment. These affected the survivors' access to health care services and the enjoyment of their right to work, and had an impact on families and communities.

Physical, social and economic effects of torture as a barrier to access health care services

The physical and economic impairments caused by torture compromised survivors' ability to access health care services. One survivor pointed out that when he sought health care services at a government hospital and was admitted, he noticed his perpetrator's presence at the hospital. They pointed at him, and this created fear in

him. This forced him to request the medical doctors to discharge him while he was still unwell. The survivor narrated:

The pain was unbearable while at home. I borrowed some money from a friend and sent a family member to buy some painkillers from the pharmacy. Unknown men to the family member approached her, and confiscated the drugs she had bought and poured them to the ground and asked her to go home.

The family was left in fear. They resorted to local herbs to ease the pain, since they could not afford to purchase more drugs.

The effects of torture upon the enjoyment of the right to work

Many survivors continue to suffer from physical impairments directly caused by the torture they experienced. This significantly impacts their abilities and possibilities of acquiring a job. One lady who had a restaurant and also stood for the position of woman councillor had trouble walking owing to temporary disability caused by physical injuries on her lower limbs as a result of the torture she underwent. Her restaurant was also destroyed. She narrated:

...I am a single mother. I had a restaurant which I ran by myself. I felt the urge to join politics and be there for my people ... look what they did to me. I have stayed in this bed for three weeks now, I cannot get up, and the pain is too much. My children beg from neighbours and I worry they may become thieves, my restaurant was destroyed completely, I cannot work. Who can employ a disabled person? Tell me... Where am I going to get capital to start up something else? Most of my relatives have passed on, and the few are far away from me.

This survivor clearly expresses how her ability to do work she used to do had been impaired by the physical consequences of torture to which she was subjected. In some cases, survivors' work is being targeted as well.

...I loved politics, I engaged in it. I was a mobiliser for the opposing presidential candidate of National Unity Platform, I was known by the people, but now no one wants to associate with me. Each time I tried to

do some work for survival, it's like the soldiers have eyes everywhere, they destroy my work, they tell me to stay home. But I have a family, my living condition changed. I was renting a three-roomed house, but my landlord chased me away because I could not pay my rent, my friend housed us in his small room (my wife and our four children), my wife left me because she could not bear the situation. I felt guilty of having to live with my children in this small house, my children are now scattered among relatives. I have tried to look for work, but no one wants to give me work because they fear the soldiers will destroy their work. I don't sleep. Even though I try to close my eyes sleep does not come.

The effects of torture on families and communities

When survivors are reunited with their families after the torture event, the effects of trauma begin to surface in complex ways. Such effects interact with the stresses of cultural adjustment, as well as loss of economic and/or social status. Men are more affected when they have to adjust to the fact that they cannot support their family, which results in change of roles within the family. This affects the family at large. Most male survivors revealed that having to depend on their wives as the breadwinner at home has a cultural impact on their beliefs and roles as men in a cultural context where a man is supposed to provide for his family.

One male survivor pointed out he has four children outside his marriage, and his wife only knows of one child. He remarked, "I cannot ask my wife to support my children out there. How can I? I cannot, and seeing them suffer pains me.... She has already taken responsibility for the house, which makes me feel helpless as a man."

Another survivor revealed the fact that he could not fulfil his conjugal rights like he used to before. He stated: "...How do I tell my wife that my testicles were twisted and I feel pain during sexual intercourse? ... She will leave me for another man."

The social fabric within the community has broken down. The cultural aspect of "help someone when they are in need" has turned to "it's your problem, deal with it". "People fear to be seen supporting you," one survivor narrated. "They fear to associate with me; some call me bad luck."

Some survivors revealed that the community members mock them. One survivor, Robert, noted that sometimes they jokingly asked him whenever he made an attempt to hang out with friends, "...Today you are out? You want the boys to flog you again?". He added that they would then laugh about it. This made him feel sick inside and now he preferred to stay at home.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE AWARENESS AND DOCUMENTATION CAMPAIGN OF SURVIVORS OF TORTURE DURING THE GENERAL ELECTIONS

Observations among Institutions

- There are few service providers who provides holistic rehabilitation services to survivors of torture in the country, and many survivors continue to battle with the torture effects with no support. This also provides a valid explanation as to why timeliness in accessibility to documentation for effective investigation remains a problem.
- Reluctance is high when it comes to investigating violations allegedly perpetrated by security agencies. This has created a trail of impunity and lack of accountability for torture.
- The evolving methods used to torture despite the forms of torture have further complicated the process of evidence storage, sharing, documentation and advocacy for strategic resolutions. Chest pain, back pain, abdominal pain and pain in the limbs are usually as a result of repeated beatings, suspension, positional torture or the general physical environment of detention. Blunt trauma (which was the commonest method used) turned out to be the commonest cause of post-torture musculo-skeletal pains.
- The Uganda Police Force prefer using the Police Form 3 for documenting torture-related allegations or cases to Form 4 of the 2017 Regulations to the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture.
- There is limited knowledge and awareness about the Istanbul Protocol, which is an international tool used in documenting cases of torture among health workers and legal personnel in the communities.

Observation in Communities

- Communities are ignorant about their rights, especially their right to freedom from torture, and the available mechanisms for seeking redress, and the need to have incidents involving them as victims professionally documented.
- The perpetration of torture and ill-treatment by private individuals continues to be on the rise. This was very common among political extremists, who often chose to use violence to solve political differences.
- There are no adequate laws that protect survivors of torture in the course of pursuing justice. Many of them are being trailed by their perpetrators, being intimidated and threatened, which hinders access to justice and effective rehabilitation services.
- There was overwhelming stigma, fear and discrimination against survivors and survivors of torture in the communities. The community feared to be associated with the survivors, thinking that they, too, would be targeted.

Observations among the Survivors Documented

- A lot of fear exists among survivors of torture. Many survivors fear to come out to access services or report cases of torture. There were some survivors whom we reached and who declined to allow their incidents to be documented, while some of those who received our services did not want to pursue legal action for fear that they would be followed and tortured again. For instance, one said, "I am facing too much fear. Phone ringtones scare me, especially at night."
- Survivors of torture presented with high levels of mental health challenges resulting from the torture experiences, and this negatively impacted their quality of life.
- Torture had left a major socio-economic gap among the survivors. Many had lost their livelihood as a result of it being directly destroyed or their being incapacitated and thus unable to work. There were those who lived in fear and were in hiding, and hence were unable to attend to their work.
- There was a high number of secondary survivors of torture, mainly children and women whose relatives had suffered direct consequences of torture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ministry of Health

- The Ministry of Health should train health workers in effective documentation of torture using the Istanbul Protocol so as to increase accessibility to and the availability of documentation services for survivors of torture.
- The Ministry should enact a policy on the comprehensive rehabilitation of survivors of torture as it is stated in General Comment Number 4 to the African Charter, and integrate the physical and psychological effects of torture into the Health Information Management System.
- The Ministry should increase accessibility to mental health services and awareness of communities so as to support the many survivors of election violence.

The Uganda Police Force

- The Uganda Police Force should investigate and institute charges using the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act 2012 on all alleged 2021 general election torture cases.
- The Uganda Police Force should adopt the use of the PPTA regulations for the effective documentation of all torture allegations.
- The Uganda Police Force should make available all its officers implicated in the 2021 general election violence and torture for investigation and prosecution in the criminal courts rather than in the disciplinary courts.
- The Uganda Police Force should continuously train its offices in the principles of human rights and public order management, especially during election periods, so as to avoid the high incidence of election violence.

Uganda People's Defence Forces

- The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) should make available all its officers implicated in the 2021 general election violence and torture for investigation and persecution in the criminal courts rather than in the disciplinary courts.

- The Uganda People's Defence Forces should continuously train its offices in the principles of human rights and public order management, especially during election periods, so as to avoid the high incidence of election violence.

The Electoral Commission

- The Electoral Commission should institute strict guidelines and mechanisms for monitoring candidates who participate in election violence and torture.

Politicians and political parties

- Political parties and politicians should put in place mechanisms that would stop their supporters from engaging in political violence.
- Political parties should raise awareness among their members about the duty to report cases of torture, as stated in the PPTA Section 20.
- Political parties should institute mechanisms that provide access to professional and timely documentation of survivors of torture and violence.

Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP)

- The ODPP should prosecute all alleged cases of torture during the 2021 general elections using the PPTA so that all perpetrators are individually held accountable.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

- CSOs should create awareness about the right to freedom from torture and the importance of early professional documentation of survivors of torture.
- CSOs should build a referral mechanism that can support the effective rehabilitation (i.e. medical treatment and psychosocial services) of survivors and access to justice.

The general public

- The general public should report all acts of torture to the relevant institutions, and also seek professional documentation of their experiences.
- The public should always use legal means to advocate for their rights, and respect one another in order to avoid political violence.

The Parliament of Uganda

- The fact that out of the 69 cases documented, none had managed to access adequate legal services warrants the State to urgently pass the National Legal Aid Bill into law. Legal aid services for torture survivors and survivors should be a normal part of life and not a privilege.
- The Witness Protection Bill of 2014 should be passed into law. Witness security and safety, besides that of the survivor, has a bearing on timely reporting for professional documentation. Silence will only escalate impunity and cripple the already worsening environment for rule of law in Uganda.
- The ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture should be advocated.

Uganda Human Rights Commission

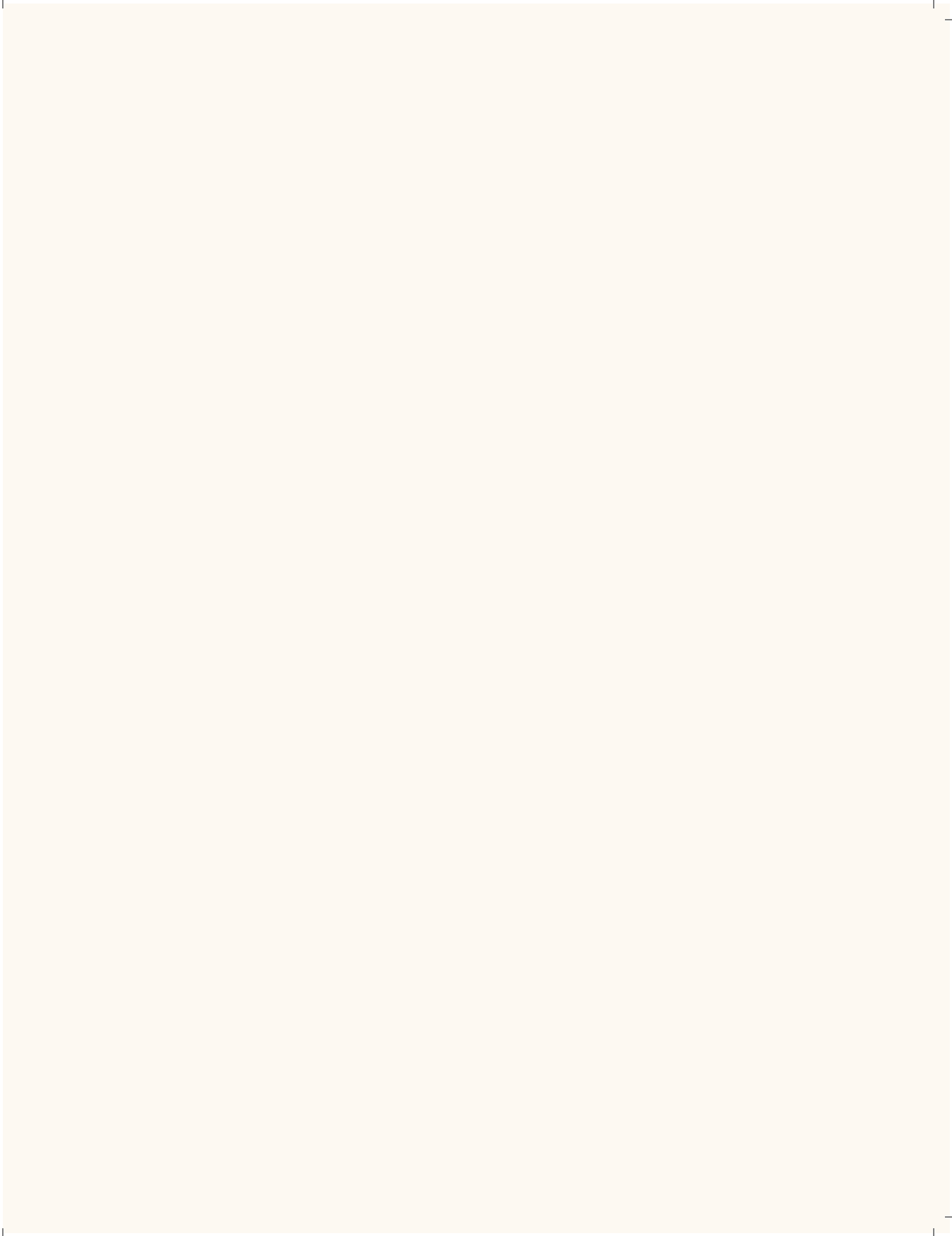
- Perpetrators should be investigated and documented, and held accountable for the abuse of the right to freedom from torture.
- The use of the PPTA 2017 regulations for the effective implementation of the Anti-torture law should be popularised.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, access to justice necessitates not only timely and effective documentation but also professional documentation. The value of awareness about evidence preservation needs to be underscored. It should further be noted that survivors suffer effects and access to rehabilitation services remains important. Further interventions that promote access to professional documentation need to be undertaken in order to increase access to rehabilitation and justice for survivors of torture. It is on the basis of this that this campaign is to be scaled up to include other districts of Uganda, and community awareness be built to enable survivors of the 2021 general election violence to have their experiences documented, which will aid access to rehabilitation and justice.

Endnotes

1. ACTV annual reports <https://actvuganda.org/resources/actv-annual-report/>
2. UHRC report 2018
3. ACTV reports <https://actvuganda.org/resources/actv-annual-report/>
4. ACTV reports <https://actvuganda.org/resources/actv-annual-report/>
5. Awareness of the documentation of torture and violence during the general election <https://actvuganda.org/publications/>
6. ACTV community perception reports
7. https://actvuganda.org/download/Laws-Of-Uganda/Constitution_of_Uganda.pdf
8. https://actvuganda.org/download/Laws-Of-Uganda/Prevention_prohibition_of_torture_act_no_3_of_2_17440.pdf
9. <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/training8rev1en.pdf>
10. <https://chapterfouruganda.org/sites/default/files/downloads/The-Prevention-and-Prohibition-of-Torture-Regulations-%202017.pdf>



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