



UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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STATEMENT PRESENTED BY UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN UGANDA DURING ITS 71ST ORDINARY SESSION.

PRESENTED BY

MS. MARIAM WANGADYA- CHAIRPERSON, UHRC

The Chairperson, State delegates, Members of the African Union Organs, Representatives of Intergovernmental and International Organisations, Heads and Representatives of NHRIs, Representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations, ladies and gentlemen;

The Uganda Human Rights Commission is the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) of the Republic of Uganda, established under article 51 of the Constitution (1995). The Commission is an independent oversight body responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights in Uganda. During the period under review, the following are some of the highlights;

A. Positive Human Rights Developments November 2021- April 2022

- i) In the exercise of our mandate of monitoring places of detention, we have realised increased observance of human rights standards particularly in Prison facilities.
- ii) Uganda Prisons Services notably managed to contain the COVID-19 pandemic by setting up isolation centres where new inmates would be quarantined for 14 days before joining other inmates.
- iii) Video conferencing was adopted by Courts to ensure continued access to justice for prisoners in spite of COVID-19 restrictions. As such detainees were able to continue to have their applications for bail heard.
- iv) Uganda participated in the Universal Peer Review mechanism in January 2022 and received 273 recommendations. Many of the recommendations concerned ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (OpCAT), recommendations for approval of the National Action Plan for Human Rights and the rights of LGBTI's among other issues. Government of Uganda is in the process of reviewing these recommendations.
- v) The Commission reignited tribunal hearings after close to 2 years of non-hearing of cases due to lack of a fully constituted Commission. In the period under review the tribunals have disposed 50 cases, with 6 dismissals and 44 awards.

- vi) Uganda has hosted high level delegations including the EU Special Representative on Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of expression.
- vii) The Parliament of Uganda has considered the Treaty on Nuclear Weapons with a view to ratification. UHRC provided its comments to the Parliament of Uganda in November 2021.

B. Negative Human Rights Developments November 2021-April 2022

- i) Terrorist bombings in Kampala in November 2021 impacted on the right to life as a result of the sense of insecurity that it created. According to Uganda Police Force, 3 people were killed and at least 33 were injured. The Commission issued a statement condemning the acts of terror and calling on speedy and fair trial for the suspects that were arrested in the aftermath of the bombings.
- ii) The challenge of overcrowding in Prisons remains a challenge particularly at night. Prisons in Uganda are currently operating a prison capacity of 20,000 prisoners and yet the current number of incarcerated prisoners stands at over 65,000.

C. Recommendations

- i) Government of Uganda should consider the recommendations of UPR with a view to adopting them in line with the legal framework.

- ii) Government of Uganda should ensure adequate funding to the Commission as a means of ensuring the promotion and protection of human rights.
- iii) Support should be given to institutions in the Governance and Security sector to facilitate efficiency in handling of cases as a means of reducing the length of time spent on pre-trial detention as one of the measures to fight congestion in prisons.
- iv) Timely investigations of allegations of human rights violations and deterrent disciplinary action should be taken particularly against errant officers in security forces.