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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kampala, Uganda

ALERT: 8 ACTIVISTS SUE UGANDA POLICE OVER BRUTALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Kampala, Uganda - 8 victims of police brutality have taken legal action against the Government of Uganda and four police officers for violation of human rights consisting of illegal arrests, detentions and others.

These 8 victims are part of over 192 human rights defenders including youth, students, civil society groups, oil affected community, and others involved in campaigns with efforts to promote human and environmental rights who have continued to suffer various violations. These campaigns are aimed at fighting against risky oil activities such as the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), the Tilenga oil project, the Hoima refinery oil project, degradation of Bugoma forest, Lakes Albert and Victoria, River Nile, Murchison Falls National Park (MFNP) and thousands of local communities whose land has been compulsorily acquired without fair compensation and or grabbed with impunity.

The victims and other human rights defenders continue accuse the government and specifically police, Resident District Commissioners, the army, and others across the country for violating their rights to assemble, demonstrate peacefully, associate, move, etc. The officials harass, intimidate, arrest, and detain human rights activists with impunity.

The following are some of the illegal arrests and detentions suffered by the above victims:

On the 5th of October 2022, police arrested and illegally detained over 9 university students and youth for 6 days. The arrests happened during a peaceful march to the European Union offices in Kampala.

Further, on the 9th of December 2022, police arrested and detained 3 EACOP activists for peacefully protesting against the human rights violations in Uganda.

On the 24th of January 2023, police illegally arrested and detained human rights activists protesting against the impunity of police for more than 48 hours.

On the 15th of September, 2023, police arrested and detained 4 human rights defenders as they peacefully marched to Parliament to deliver a petition requesting MPs to use their legislative and oversight powers to end fossil fuel investments in Uganda.

On the 20th of November 2023, police arrested and illegally detained 6 (six) human rights activists who were peacefully protesting against the Chinese government's plans to fund oil activities in Uganda for 3 days at Jinja Road police station.

On the 24th of November 2023, police illegally arrested and detained 7(seven) youth human rights activists peacefully petitioning the Ugandan Parliament to intervene and to stop police brutality against human and environmental defenders for over 20 days.

On the 15th of December, 2023, 15 (fifteen) students were illegally arrested and detained for protesting against the police's impunity in stopping the activities of civil society

On 26th of June 2024, police illegally arrested and detained 30 human rights activists who were peacefully protesting at the Chinese Embassy in Uganda demanding that the Chinese government should not fund activities that worsen climate change in Uganda.

THREE CASES FILED IN COURT

On July 3rd, 2024, 8 human rights defenders filed 3 separate cases at the Uganda High Court in Kampala against Mr. Kiryowa Kiwanuka-Attorney General of Uganda and 10 police officers namely ASP. Nsenge Alex, SGT. Okoth James, ASP. Okoyo Martin, Twinamatsiko Onesmus, PC No. 74183 Wabwire James, PC Wandera Jacob Bwire ,ASP Nahamya David, PC Okello (Head of Field Force Unit - FFU at Jinja Road Police Station), ASP Patrick Opiyo and OC Alex Micwemirungi all in their private capacity.

The activists who have sued include Bob Barigye, Alphonse Nkurunziza, Vicent Lubega Nsamba, Gerald Wenani, David Musiri, Sanya Ivan Elivis, Debbo Sean Tevin and Ssekandi Eric.

These human rights defenders-plaintiffs in this matter seek the following remedies from the court:

A declaration that the actions of the Government and police violated their human rights enacted in the Constitution: The human rights defenders are seeking a court declaration that the actions of the government and police amounted to torture, brutality, inhuman and degrading treatment contrary to Articles 24 and 44 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda.

A declaration that the actions of government and police violated the right to assemble: human rights defenders and youth activists are asking the court to declare that the police's obstruction of their peaceful demonstrations was a direct violation of their rights to assemble, associate, and

movement, and freedom of speech and expression, as guaranteed by Articles 28 and 29 of the constitution.

An order that the human rights defenders-plaintiffs be entitled to compensation: The activists want the court to order in line with Article 50 of the Constitution that the victims of human rights violations are entitled to compensation for the violations suffered and damages incurred.

Permanent injunction: They also want the court to issue a permanent injunction to halt all illegal actions of the police and the government to allow human rights defenders to do their work freely.

Background of the incidents

Since the discovery of oil in 2006, many human rights defenders in Uganda have continued to suffer various human rights violations. Between 2021 and 2024 alone, over 192 human rights defenders including civil society staff, students, youth, affected communities, and others have suffered gross human rights violations ranging from harassment, intimidation, arrests, detentions, unexplained office vandalism, office closure by the government through NGO Bureau directives and others.

The above legal actions mark a significant step by the citizens and human rights defenders in stopping the shrinking civic space in Uganda. Legal redress will help all citizens to continue the struggle to promote human and environmental dignity in Uganda.

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