

[Uganda | Repeal laws which restrict the legitimate activities of human rights defenders](#)

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States should encourage Uganda to refrain from criminalising the legitimate activities of human rights defenders and repeal all laws and policies which restrict their rights and activities through its forthcoming UPR, ISHR, Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum and Chapter Four Uganda have said in a joint briefing paper.



Uganda is scheduled to be reviewed at the 26th session of the Universal Periodic Review in early November. Despite accepting recommendations in its last UPR to ensure human rights defenders can conduct their legitimate work without intimidation, and to investigate and hold police and security officers accountable for attacks against defenders; restrictions are placed on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, journalists face restrictions, and NGOs working on human rights, corruption and land rights conduct their work in an increasingly hostile environment.

Women human rights defenders in Uganda work in a particularly hostile environment, often facing smear campaigns, physical violence, verbal abuse and death threats. Political rights activists opposing the Government also face significant risk, while NGOs working on rights to land and resources face particular threats and challenges - threatened with arrest, and disbandment for promoting and protecting land rights.

Further, while the Anti-Homosexuality Act was struck down in August 2014, during the five months the Act was in force, Sexual Minorities Uganda documented over 150 cases of violations against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, including arrests as well as physical violence and harassment.

Legislation is commonly used in Uganda to restrict the activities of defenders, including:

- The Public Order Management Act that imposes restrictions on public meetings and grants the police discretionary powers to prohibit and disperse public gatherings perceived to be of a political nature.
- The Non-governmental Organisations Law which enables the Government to arbitrarily restrict the way NGOs operate.
- The NGO Registration Regulations which restrict the capacity of NGOs to engage with communities and respond when needed.
- The Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill of 2015 which contains provisions that can restrict the funding of NGOs.

This [Briefing Paper](#) on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda - developed by ISHR, and our national partners [Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum](#) and [Chapter Four, Uganda](#) - is intended to assist States and other stakeholders to formulate questions and recommendations regarding the protection of human rights defenders during the UPR.

Key recommendations that should be made to Uganda at the Universal Periodic Review include:

- Refrain from actions that silence and restrict the rights of all persons, including civil society activists and organisations who comment on public policy and laws.
- Combat impunity by ensuring the prompt, thorough and impartial investigation of all violations against human rights defenders, the prosecution of perpetrators, and access to effective remedies for victims.
- Refrain from criminalising the legitimate activities of human rights defenders and repeal all laws and policies which restrict their rights and activities, including the Public Order Management Act, the Uganda Communications Act (2013), the NGO Registration Act 2016, the Anti-Pornography Act and the Computer Misuse Act.
- Implement campaigns to raise awareness about the important and legitimate work of HRDs, targeting public officials and law enforcement agencies, as well as wider society.

For further information about the Briefing Paper or for any assistance or advice in the formulation of recommendations, please contact ISHR's Tess McEvoy, t.mcevoy@ishr.ch.

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