



Centre for
Minority Rights
Development

Republic of Uganda

Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review

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**CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation,
NGO in General Consultative Status with ECOSOC**

and

Centre for Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** CIVICUS is a global alliance of civil society organisations (CSOs) and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society around the world. Founded in 1993, CIVICUS has members in more than 180 countries throughout the world.
- 1.2** The Centre for Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE) is a regional organisation registered in Kenya that works on governance and human rights issues and defending the rights of human rights defenders (HRDs) and Indigenous peoples. CEMIRIDE is committed to empowering citizens, particularly ethnic minority communities and Indigenous peoples, to contribute to sustainable peace, reconciliation and social justice across the Great Lakes region.
- 1.3** In this submission the two organisations assess the Government of Uganda's compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society and the full enjoyment of civil and political rights. Specifically, we examine Uganda's fulfilment of the rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and the protection of HRDs since its last UPR in January 2022. To this end, we analyse Uganda's implementation of recommendations received during the 3rd UPR cycle and provide targeted follow-up recommendations.
- 1.4** During the 3rd UPR cycle, the Government of Uganda received 28 recommendations related to the space for civil society (civic space). The government accepted one recommendation and noted 27. There were nine recommendations on freedoms of expression and opinion, eight on HRDs, seven on freedom of association and four on freedom of peaceful assembly. However, our evaluation demonstrates that it has not implemented any of the recommendations.
- 1.5** We are particularly concerned by harassment, intimidation and judicial persecution of HRDs as a result of their work. HRDs have been physically assaulted by state personnel, arrested and detained and some are regularly summoned to report to the police based on fictitious accusations in an effort to intimidate them. Debates on government corruption, good governance, human rights and political succession are increasingly stifled. We are particularly concerned about acts of intimidation and attacks on citizens, CSO personnel, HRDs and journalists in the period around the general election on 15 January 2026.
- 1.6** We are also concerned by the promulgation of restrictive laws that severely constrain freedom of expression and impede the work of independent media houses. Since its last review, Uganda has passed laws that aim to curtail civil society freedoms and restrict independent reporting by media houses.

1.7 As a result of these concerns, the CIVICUS Monitor classes Uganda's civic space as repressed, indicating the existence of serious restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms and active civic participation.¹

- Section 2 of this submission examines Uganda's implementation of UPR recommendations and compliance with international standards concerning freedom of association.
- Section 3 examines issues related to the protection of civil society activists and HRDs.
- Section 4 assesses Uganda's progress regarding freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information.
- Section 5 reviews the situation concerning freedom of peaceful assembly.
- Section 6 presents recommendations to address the concerns raised and support the implementation of UPR recommendations.
- Section 7 in an annex evaluating the implementation status of civic space-related recommendations from the 3rd cycle.

2. Freedom of association

2.1 During Uganda's examination under the 3rd UPR cycle, the government received seven recommendations relating to the right to freedom of association and creating an enabling environment for CSOs. These included a recommendation to 'ensure the full respect of the freedoms of association'. The government noted all the recommendations and has failed to implement any.

2.2 Uganda's 1995 Constitution guarantees freedom of association. Article 29 (1) (e) provides for the rights of Ugandans to form and join associations. It recognises 'freedom of association which shall include the freedom to form and join associations including trade unions and political and other civic organisations'.² However, in practice this right is frequently undermined. State agencies and personnel and agencies have on several occasions attacked and threatened human rights actors, including CSOs, and have suspended organisations, disrupting documentation of human rights violations.³

2.3 The government also uses restrictive legislation to curb the activities of CSOs. The Non-Governmental Organisations Act, 2016 (NGO Act), as amended by the Non-Governmental Organisations (Amendment) Act, 2024, place limits on the independence of CSOs. In section 16, the NGO Act grants the NGO Bureau, a state agency, broad discretionary powers to revoke or suspend permits and dissolve CSO boards on vague grounds such as acting 'contrary to the laws of Uganda' or in a manner 'prejudicial to the interests of Uganda'.⁴ The NGO Act imposes burdensome registration procedures and the need to renew permit applications. This raises serious human rights concerns, particularly regarding the likelihood of

¹ CIVICUS Monitor: Uganda, <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/uganda>.

² The Constitution of Uganda, 1995.

³ 'Uganda: Suspension of at least seven human rights NGOs ahead of general elections', World Organisation Against Torture, 14 January 2026, <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/urgent-interventions/uganda-suspension-of-at-least-seven-human-rights-ngos-ahead-of-general-elections>.

⁴ Non-Governmental Organisations Act, 2016, as amended in 2024.

increased administrative control and political oversight over CSOs. Such measures directly undermine their independence and expose them to heightened risks of political interference, particularly in areas such as licensing and operational decision-making, and are inconsistent with respect for the right to freedom of association.⁵

2.4 In practice, there has been discriminatory enforcement. The administrative requirements established by the NGO Act and the actions of public officials have disproportionately affected organisations working on civic education, election observation, governance, human rights, minority rights, policing and security sector reform.⁶

2.5 Over the last four years a disturbing pattern continued to manifest through the mass cancellation and suspension of permits for CSOs.⁷ For instance, ahead of the January 2026 general election, the permits of seven human rights organisations, including the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims, Alliance For Election Finance Monitoring, Chapter Four, Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda and National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders, were suspended without prior notice or meaningful opportunity to respond, allegedly based on intelligence information that their operations were prejudicial to national security and contrary to Ugandan law, in purported adherence to section 42(d) of the NGO Act 2016.⁸ The CSOs were instructed to cease operations with immediate effect until investigations were concluded. Subsequent to the suspension, five of the organisations had their accounts frozen. These organisations remain closed with their bank accounts frozen.

2.6 Following suspensions, some CSOs have remained in operational limbo for months or years, unable to function but not formally dissolved or deregistered, undermining legal certainty and violating freedom of association.⁹ The cumulative effect of such restrictive actions has been programme closures, self-censorship and withdrawal of donor support, resulting in a chilling effect that continues to tighten Uganda's civic space.

2.7 In April 2026, parliament passed the Protection of Sovereignty Act, 2026,¹⁰ which carries serious implications for civil society, increasing state oversight of activities backed by international funders and putting CSOs that

⁵ 'The human rights implications of national legislative developments and applications ahead of the 2026 general elections in Uganda', United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/statements/20260109-press-rel-launch-publ-upt-uga-uganda-office-hc-en.pdf>.

⁶ 'Uganda: Human Rights NGOs Suspended and Defenders Targeted Ahead of General Elections', ProtectDefend.EU Watch, 28 January 2026, <https://protectdefenders.eu/uganda-human-rights-ngos-suspended-and-defenders-targeted-ahead-of-general-elections>.

⁷ 'NGO permits of Chapter Four, UNNGOF and other CSOs suspended ahead of the 2026 elections', EU SEE, 12 January 2026, <https://eusee.hivos.org/alert/ngo-permits-of-chapter-four-unngof-and-other-csos-suspended-ahead-of-the-2026-elections>.

⁸ 'Uganda: Suspension of at least seven human rights NGOs ahead of general elections', Human Rights Watch, 14 January 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/14/uganda-government-suspends-civic-groups-ahead-of-elections>.

⁹ 'NGOs keep disappearing: Here is why', The Monitor, 27 May 2026, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/business/markets/ngos-keep-disappearing-here-is-why-5474568>.

¹⁰ Protection of Sovereignty Act, 2026, https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/128496/source_file/987c608838843f52/ug-act-2026-7-publication-document.pdf.

receive international funding in a precarious position. While presented as safeguarding the country's independence from outside interference, the law risks curbing genuine civic engagement, particularly on issues of accountability, democratic processes, elections, governance and human rights. Because the law's terminology on foreign interests and externally funded activity is so open-ended, officials could potentially label routine advocacy or policy-focused organisations funded by international donors as illegitimate foreign meddling.¹¹

- 2.8** In August 2021, the National Bureau of NGOs suspended 54 CSOs for reasons including fraud, forgery and non-compliance.¹² The suspended CSOs included the Center for Conflict Resolution, Chapter Four Uganda, Citizens' Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda, Citizens Election Watch-IT and Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies. In a positive development, however, some CSOs have been able to get decisions overturned by court after several months of closure and frozen bank accounts,¹³ although others, including Sexual Minorities of Uganda, remain closed.¹⁴

3. Attacks, harassment and intimidation towards civil society activists and human rights defenders

- 3.1** In Uganda's examination under the 3rd UPR cycle, the government received eight recommendations relating to the protection of civil society activists, HRDs and journalists, including a recommendation to 'end the intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders and civil society organizations so that they can exist and operate freely and independently'. The government noted all the recommendations. As evidenced below, it has not implemented any.
- 3.2** Uganda's international legal obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) articles 9, and 14 and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights articles 1 and 7 require it to guarantee the rights to equality before the law, a fair hearing and protection from arbitrary arrest and judicial harassment. The 1998 UN Declaration on HRDs further obliges states to ensure that HRDs can operate free from intimidation and retaliation.¹⁵ In practice, HRDs working on civic space, governance and human rights issues face criminalisation, reprisals and surveillance for their work.
- 3.3** Article 28 of the constitution guarantees every person the right to a fair hearing and the right to legal representation. Article 50 explicitly allows any person or organisation to bring an action against the violation of another's rights, a critical

¹² 'Statement on Halting of Operations of Fifty Four (54) NGOs Due to Non-Compliance with the NGO ACT 2016', Ministry of Internal Affairs, 20 August 2021, <https://theugandatribune.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ngo-bureau-halts-operations-of-58-ngos-aug-20-2021.pdf>.

¹³ 'Civic Freedom Monitor – Uganda', International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 1 June 2026, <https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/uganda>.

¹⁴ 'Uganda Bans Prominent LGBTQ Rights Group', Human Rights Watch, 12 August 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/12/uganda-bans-prominent-lgbtq-rights-group>.

¹⁵ 'UN Declaration on human rights defenders', UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-human-rights-defenders/declaration-human-rights-defenders>.

tool for HRDs that is often undermined by judicial threats.¹⁶ Article 42 also provides that any administrative official or body, such as the NGO Bureau, when suspending an organisation, is constitutionally required to treat persons justly and fairly. The Human Rights (Enforcement) Act, 2019, provides for a mode of prosecuting human rights cases and creates individual liability for state agents who engage in human rights violations against all people, including HRDs.¹⁷ However, Uganda lacks a specific Human Rights Defenders Protection Act, leaving HRDs exposed to prosecution under general criminal and security laws. Uganda has not harmonised its Computer Misuse Act, 2022,¹⁸ Penal Code Act (Cap. 128), 1950¹⁹ and Public Order Management Act (POMA), 2013²⁰ with international standards, enabling misuse of these laws against HRDs.

- 3.4** Despite the legal framework, the government continues to violate the fundamental rights of HRDs through arbitrary arrests, detentions and prosecutions. Authorities bring malicious and spurious charges that rarely result in convictions, but that clearly constitute systemic judicial harassment and intimidation in an attempt to deter protests and the work of HRDs.
- 3.5** On 25 June 2026, security forces raided the Kampala offices of Akina Mama wa Afrika, a feminist CSO. Three days later, they arbitrarily detained its Executive Director, Eunice Musiime, along with Sarah Bireete, who heads the Center for Constitutional Governance. Both were subsequently released without any charges being filed against them.²¹ Sarah Bireete was previously arrested on 30 December 2025 following public criticism of state repression, illustrating how the state retaliates for legitimate human rights work.²² She was charged under section 35 of the Data Protection and Privacy Act for allegedly unlawfully obtaining and disclosing voters' information between January and December 2025. She was later released on bail and the case continues in court.
- 3.6** On 24 January 2023, police officers arrested and assaulted environmental defender Bob Barigye and subjected him to incommunicado detention for two days. He organised a public meeting to debate the environmental, economic and human rights impacts of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).²³ While in detention, Barigye was denied access to his lawyer for two days, during which time he was subjected to derogatory statements and intimidation and ordered to sign a statement, which he refused to do. On 27 January 2023, after four days in detention without charge, Barigye was released on a police bond and charged

¹⁶ The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, op. cit.

¹⁷ Human Rights (Enforcement) Act Cap 12, 2019.

¹⁸ The Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act, 2022, [https://bills.parliament.ug/attachments/Computer%20Misuse%20\(Amendment\)Act,%202022.pdf](https://bills.parliament.ug/attachments/Computer%20Misuse%20(Amendment)Act,%202022.pdf).

¹⁹ Penal Code Act (Cap. 128), 1950, .

²⁰ Public Order Management Act, Cap. 326, 2013, https://media.ulii.org/media/legislation/18570/source_file/db928d3bf511451e/2013-9.pdf.

²¹ 'Uganda: Authorities must immediately end the harassment of activists, allow media to operate freely', Amnesty International, 29 June 2026, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/06/uganda-authorities-must-immediately-end-the-harassment-of-activists-allow-media-to-operate-freely>.

²² 'Arrest of Ugandan Activist Ahead of Elections Spells Trouble', Human Rights Watch, 8 January 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/08/arrest-of-ugandan-activist-ahead-of-elections-spells-trouble>.

²³ 'Bob Barigye charged and released on police bond', Front Line Defenders, 24 January 2023, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/bob-barigye-charged-and-released-police-bond>.

with obstruction of a police officer on duty. The charges were dropped six months later.

4. Freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information

- 4.1. Under the 3rd UPR cycle, the government received nine recommendations relating to freedom of expression, media freedom and access to information. Recommendations included those to ‘respect freedom of expression online, including by ending the practice of enforcing internet shutdowns’ and ‘end the intimidation and harassment of domestic and international journalists by State authorities and provide a free and safe operating environment for the media.’ The government noted all the recommendations and has not implemented them, as discussed below.
- 4.2. The Republic of Uganda is bound by key human rights obligations, including IC-CPR article 19 and article 9 of the African Charter, which provide for the right of citizens to express and disseminate opinions and views within the law.
- 4.3. Uganda’s domestic framework guarantees the right to freedom of expression and speech. Article 29 (1) of the constitution states that ‘every person shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression which shall include freedom of the press and other media.’²⁴ In addition, article 41 of the constitution and section 5 of the Access to Information Act protect the right of access to information for all people. Uganda has a vibrant press with hundreds of private radio stations and independent newspapers. Most independent newspapers are often critical of government practices and actions.
- 4.4. The Penal Code includes provisions that criminalise hate speech, incitement to violence and actions intended to foster discrimination or hatred. Under section 41, any person who prints, publishes, speaks or performs an act likely to degrade, vilify or expose others to hatred or contempt, cause alienation or despondency, generate discontent or disaffection or otherwise promote hostility or ill will against any community or group on the basis of ethnicity, regional origin, religion or tribe commits an offence punishable by up to five years’ imprisonment. In addition, sections 50 to 53 address related offences, including incitement to violence, the promotion of hatred, sectarianism and sedition.
- 4.5. In 2022, the state passed the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022, which criminalises broad categories of online activity. The Act has sections that prescribe a penalty of up to seven years’ imprisonment for sharing vaguely defined hate speech, malicious information or unsolicited information, as well as for the unauthorised sharing of information about children and the misuse of social media.²⁵ Unauthorised access to data and information is punishable by up to 10 years’ imprisonment.²⁶ These provisions, framed without clear safeguards, create space for abuse, misapplication and selective enforcement, particularly against

²⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, op. cit.

²⁵ The Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act.

²⁶ Ibid.

activists, journalists and members of the political opposition. For instance, Sarah Bireete was charged under this Act,²⁷ while Timothy Kalyegira is still in detention following refusal by the state to grant bail on charges under the Act.²⁸

- 4.6. Attacks and restrictions persist against independent newspapers, journalists and other media. Media restrictions include arbitrary shutdowns of outlets. For instance, on 28 June 2026, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, military chief and son of President Yoweri Museveni, ordered the shutdown of the Nation Media Group outlets, comprising the Daily Monitor newspaper, Dembe FM, The East African, KFM, NTV and Spark TV, with no justification for the decision.²⁹
- 4.7. In October 2025, the Uganda Communications Commission imposed a blanket ban on live broadcasting of ‘unlawful processions’ and revoked accreditations for reporters from The Daily Monitor and NTV Uganda,³⁰ in violation of international standards that require restrictions to be lawful, necessary and proportionate. These cases illustrate the systematic use of criminal law to silence dissenting voices, in violation of global standards stipulated in the ICCPR³¹ and established African Commission jurisprudence on freedom of expression.
- 4.8. Ahead of the 15 January 2026 general election, the government, through the Uganda Communications Commission, imposed a total internet shutdown followed by a prolonged, targeted block of social media platforms.³² The regulator cited concerns over content that could incite violence and undermine public confidence and national security, online misinformation and potential electoral fraud.³³ This blanket restriction severely impeded access to information, citizens’ ability to communicate and election monitoring efforts.³⁴ The move went against the fact that access to the internet is one of the cornerstones through which people exercise their right to access information and their freedom of expression.³⁵

²⁷ ‘Sarah Bireete To Be Charged Under Computer Misuse Act as Cyber Bullying & Hate Speech Charges Await Her-TO BE ARRAIGNED ON FRIDAY’, MulengereNews, January 2026, <https://mulengereNews.com/sarah-bireete-to-be-charged-under-computer-misuse-act-as-cyber-bullying-hate-speech-charges-await-her-to-be-arraigned-on-friday/>.

²⁸ ‘Uganda: Missing Journalist Kalyegira in Custody, Faces Computer Misuse Charges’, AllAfrica, 29 June 2026, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202606290465.html>.

²⁹ ‘Uganda’s leading media outlets shut down by army chief’, BBC, 28 June 2026, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cj9gyk1z7ngo>.

³⁰ ‘NTV, Daily Monitor still banned from parliament’, NTV, 28 October 2025, <https://ntv.co.ug/blog/ntv-daily-monitor-still-banned-from-parliament>.

³¹ ICCPR, Article 19.

³² ‘Suspension of Public Internet Access, Selected Mobile Services and Civil Society Organizations’ Permits during the Election Period in Uganda’, The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, 16 January 2026, <https://achprau.int/en/news/press-releases/2026-01-16/press-release-suspension-public-internet-access-uganda>.

³³ ‘Uganda Imposes Internet Blackout Pre-Election’, WION Dispatch, 16 January 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=klNqr6okpFE>.

³⁴ ‘Uganda: Blanket Internet Shutdown Violates Rights’, Human Rights Watch, 15 January 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/15/uganda-blanket-internet-shutdown-violates-rights>.

³⁵ ‘The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet: resolution’, Human Rights Council, 1 July 2016, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/845727?ln=en&v=pdf>.

5. Freedom of peaceful assembly

- 5.1. During Uganda's examination under the 3rd UPR cycle, the government received four recommendations on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, including to 'continue to reinforce measures that guarantee the rights of citizens to peaceful demonstration' and 'improve the legal and policy framework for ensuring the freedom of peaceful assembly and protecting civic space, in accordance with international human rights standards.' The government noted all recommendations and has failed to implement any.
- 5.2. Article 29 (1) (d) of the constitution guarantees the rights of citizens to 'assemble and demonstrate together with others, peacefully and unarmed and to petition'.³⁶ ICCPR article 21 further guarantees the right to peaceful assembly. However, authorities have violently suppressed peaceful assemblies, including protests and rallies. Authorities frequently use excessive force and regularly arrest protesters. Ahead of the 2026 general election, authorities used violence to disperse political rallies and other meetings organised by members of the political opposition.
- 5.3. Despite constitutional guarantees, restrictive legislation is used to prevent peaceful public gathering. POMA³⁷ effectively converted the right to assemble into a privilege subject to police approval. POMA section 5 states that notification is required. In practice, notifications from civil society and opposition groups are routinely rejected, while ruling party activities proceed unhindered. Authorities frequently invoke vague grounds such as 'common nuisance' and 'inciting violence' to criminalise peaceful protests.³⁸ Although section 8 of POMA was nullified, the Constitutional Court left other sections, such as 4, 5 and 10, untouched, and police use these to restrict assembly rights.
- 5.4. Section 36 of the Police Act Cap. 303, 1994 provides for the dispersal of an assembly after it has been ordered to be terminated. The section gives any police officer powers to disperse any assembly and use all such force as reasonably necessary. It gives immunity from civil or criminal liability to an officer or anyone assisting them if the action taken results in harm or death.³⁹
- 5.5. People have been arrested for taking part in peaceful protests. For example, on 12 February 2025, Ssuuna James, a cyber-activist and Executive Director of Freedom Hive Uganda, was arrested and charged with common nuisance under section 148(1) Cap. 128 of the Penal Code.⁴⁰ This followed a peaceful protest he coordinated on the government's non-compliance with a Supreme Court ruling on the transfer of civilians from military to civilian courts.

³⁶ Constitution of Uganda, op cit.

³⁷ The Public Order Management Act, 2013, sections 5 and 6.

³⁸ '17 Kampala traders charged with common nuisance after tax protests', The Monitor, 20 August 2025, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/17-kampala-traders-charged-with-common-nuisance-after-tax-protests-5161244>.

³⁹ 'Police Act, CAP 303', Uganda Police Forces, 14 October 1994, <https://www.upf.go.ug/download/the-police-act>.

⁴⁰ International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, op. cit.

- 5.6. Protesters against the EACOP development have been targeted. On 15 September 2023, 50 university students peacefully marched to parliament to deliver a petition asking members of parliament to use their legislative and oversight powers to end fossil fuel investments in Uganda. Police officers denied them access and violently arrested four of the students,⁴¹ detaining them for over four days before releasing them on a police bond. Their cases on public nuisance charges are pending.
- 5.7. On 5 October 2022, nine university student activists were arrested⁴² for holding a peaceful demonstration in support of a European Union resolution⁴³ calling for the suspension of EACOP. The students were released on bail and spent a year in legal uncertainty until 7 November 2023, when their cases were dismissed due to the failure of the prosecutors to produce witnesses.⁴⁴
- 5.8. On 24 November 2023, seven university students – Dedo Sean Tevin, Kabuza John, Kayanga Ashraf, Nuwagaba Oscar, Sanya Ivan Elvis, Ssekandi Eric and Wafula Simon – were arrested in Kampala’s Central Division while attempting to deliver a petition to parliament.⁴⁵ They were charged with incitement to violence under section 83(1) of the Penal Code Act and accused of making statements encouraging demonstrations against EACOP, which the government asserted could lead to destruction or damage to property.⁴⁶
- 5.9. On 26 June 2024, police arrested 30 protesters who had gathered with placards outside the Chinese embassy in Kampala to present a petition against Chinese funding of EACOP.⁴⁷ They were detained during the day and released on a police bond that night, under investigation on charges of involvement in an unlawful assembly, but the matter has never been brought to court.
- 5.10. On 9 August 2024, police arrested 47 students who were taking part in a peaceful march to parliament to protest against EACOP. They were arrested before reaching parliament, and 45 were detained at Jinja Police station overnight. The 45 were released on 10 August 2024, pending police investigations. Two people – Kalyango Shafik and Oundo Humphrey – were detained at Central Police Station and only released on a police bond on 14 August 2024, under investigation on charges of incitement to violence. The matter has never been brought to court.⁴⁸

⁴¹ ‘Kyambogo University: 4 Students Still Held by Court Over EACOP Protests’, Campus Bee, 6 October 2022, [Kyambogo University: 4 Students Still Held by Court Over EACOP Protests - Campus Bee](#).

⁴² ‘Nine Students Remanded After Protests in Support of EU Resolution on EACOP’, Uganda Radio Network, 5 October 2022, https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/nine-students-remanded-after-protests-in-support-of-eu-resolution-on-eacop?districtId=730&_cf_chl_f_tk=as5dnfq8FliHgxKIRJDYqJ.kD2y5qr6iOdb0To0v1cQ-1782850094-1.0.1.1-MdOFPVnvBFISzCS.3_KGqe33B.tN0VGT1KA28AFqll#google_vignette.

⁴³ ‘Motion for a resolution - B9-0409/2022’, European Parliament, 13 September 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-9-2022-0409_EN.html.

⁴⁴ ‘Human rights violations against environmental human rights defenders in Uganda’, Youth for Green Communities, 13 August 2024, <https://www.egiuganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024.08.13-Uganda-ACHPR.pdf>.

⁴⁵ ‘Release Students Against EACOP Political Prisoners’, Action Network, November 2023, <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/release-students-against-eacop-political-prisoners>.

⁴⁶ Uganda v. Kabuza John & 6 Others (CR 1142/2023), Charge Sheet.

⁴⁷ ‘Anti-EACOP: 30 arrested at Chinese Embassy’, The Monitor, 26 June 2024, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/anti-eacop-30-arrested-at-chinese-embassy-4670378>.

⁴⁸ ‘Uganda: Crackdown on activists protesting against large-scale oil projects’, International Federation for Human Rights, 3 September 2024, <https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/uganda/uganda-crackdown-on-activists-protesting-against-large-scale-oil>

- 5.11. On 26 August 2024, police arrested 21 people, including environmental activists, as they were marching towards parliament, China National Offshore Oil Company offices and the TotalEnergies head office in Kampala to hand in a petition against the EACOP project.⁴⁹ The group included students, teachers and people from the Hoima District affected by the development. They were charged with common nuisance for ‘making a procession in the middle of the road while carrying placards and banners’, an act the authorities deemed unauthorised, and causing ‘annoyance or obstruction or inconvenience to the public’.⁵⁰
- 5.12. On 3 July 2024, police arrested and detained over 100 young people who participated in protests against corruption,⁵¹ signalling a broader pattern of using force against civic expression.⁵² In November 2025, Reuters also reported that over 300 supporters and officials of opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, were detained during campaign activities in Kampala, where security forces used pepper spray, teargas and water cannon to disperse crowds.⁵³
- 5.13. Uganda’s use of excessive force in policing public assemblies violates its obligations under ICCPR article 21 and article 11 of the African Charter, which require the facilitation of peaceful assemblies and permit restrictions only when necessary and proportionate. Frivolous prosecutions undermine the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair and timely trial by placing people in prolonged legal uncertainty without resolution. In such circumstances, the criminal process itself becomes punitive, subjecting accused people to financial burdens, ongoing stigma and psychological stress without a determination of guilt.

6. Recommendations to the Government of Uganda

CIVICUS and CEMIRIDE are profoundly concerned by the failure on the part of the Government of the Republic of Uganda to fully implement the recommendations relating to civic space and HRDs. CIVICUS and CEMIRIDE call on the government to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society, in accordance with the rights enshrined in the ICCPR, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and Human Rights Council resolutions 22/6, 27/5 and 27/31.

At a minimum, the government should take urgent steps to prevent further backsliding on basic and fundamental civil and political rights. It should take steps to ensure the realisation of the rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly, the right to operate free from unwarranted state interference

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Uganda v. Kothurach Margret & 19 Others (CRB 1446/2024), Charge Sheet.

⁵¹ ‘Uganda Police arrest over 100 anti-corruption protesters’, Eye Radio, 27 July 2024, <https://www.eyeradio.org/uganda-police-arrest-over-100-anti-corruption-protestors>.

⁵² ‘Uganda: Authorities must unconditionally release protestors still unlawfully detained’, 25 July 2024, Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/07/uganda-authorities-must-unconditionally-release-protestors-still-unlawfully-detained>.

⁵³ ‘Ugandan opposition says over 300 supporters detained in presidential campaign’, Reuters, 25 November 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ugandan-opposition-says-over-300-supporters-detained-presidential-campaign-2025-11-25>.

and surveillance, the right to communicate and cooperate with UN and other regional human rights bodies and the state's duty to protect. In the light of this, the following specific recommendations are made:

6.1. Freedom of association

- Amend the NGO Act 2016 to ensure compliance with international standards by clearly defining unclear provisions such as 'prejudicial to the interests of Uganda' and establish independent oversight and appeal mechanisms for decisions made by the NGO Bureau.
- Lift ongoing suspensions of the operations of civil society organizations CSOs.
- Ensure that CSOs and political parties can operate freely and independently without fear of reprisals

6.2. Civil society activists and HRDs

- Take immediate measures to ensure that civil society activists and HRDs can operate in a safe environment free from acts of intimidation or reprisals, and that complaints of intimidation and reprisals are duly investigated, including through the revision of the restrictive provisions of the of the Penal Code.
- Promote an open civic and political space by repealing all laws and policies that restrict the activities of HRDs.
- End the harassment and intimidation of civil society activists and HRDs and ensure that they can exist and operate freely and independently.
- Ensure the protection of civil society activists, HRDs, journalists and members of the political opposition, allowing them to carry out their work freely.
- Investigate thoroughly, transparently, independently and effectively allegations of attacks against bloggers, civil society activists, HRDs, journalists and others in the context of the 2026 general election and hold those responsible to account.
- Work on specific legislative measures to end the harassment of civil society activists, HRDs and journalists, including by continuing efforts towards the adoption of a bill on HRDs.

6.3. Freedom of expression, media freedoms and access to information

- Guarantee the right to freedom of expression, including in the context of elections.
- Ensure that representatives and supporters of civil society, the media and political parties are not restricted from exercising the right to freedom of expression.

- End the harassment and intimidation of domestic and international journalists by state authorities and ensure a free and safe operating environment for the media.
- Respect freedom of expression online, including by ending the practice of enforcing internet shutdowns.

6.4. Freedom of peaceful assembly

- Amend the Public Order Management Act, 2013 to ensure freedom of peaceful assembly in line with international human rights standards.
- Amend the Police Act Cap. 303, 1994 to ensure freedom of peaceful assembly and protection of civic space, in accordance with international human rights standards.
- Create a safe environment where people can exercise the full enjoyment of the freedom of peaceful assembly, in line with Uganda's international human rights commitments.

6.5 Access to UN Special Procedures mandate holders

- The Government should extend a standing invitation to all UN Special Procedure mandate holders and prioritise official visits by the: 1) Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; 2) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression; 3) Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and of Association; and 4) Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers

6.6 State engagement with civil society

- Implement transparent and inclusive mechanisms of public consultations with CSOs on all issues mentioned above and enable the more effective involvement of civil society in the preparation of law and policy.
- Include CSOs in the UPR process before finalising and submitting the national report.
- Systematically consult with civil society on the implementation of UPR recommendations, including by holding periodical comprehensive consultations with a diverse range of civil society.
- Incorporate the results of this UPR into action plans for the promotion and protection of all human rights, taking into account the proposals of civil society, and present a midterm evaluation report to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of the recommendations of this session.

7. Annex: Assessment of implementation of civic space recommendations under the 3rd cycle

Recommendation	Position	Assessment/comments on level of implementation
125.146 Continue to reinforce measures that guarantee the rights of citizens to peaceful demonstration and freedom of expression (Ghana); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Supported	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 5
125.137 Create a safe environment in which to exercise the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, aligning the legislation with international law and preventing attacks and intimidation against human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors (Italy); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 5
125.143 Improve the legal and policy framework for ensuring the freedom of peaceful assembly and protecting civic space, in accordance with international human rights standards (Republic of Korea); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 5
125.144 Lift ongoing suspensions of the operations of civil society organizations to contribute to promoting and protecting freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association (United States of America); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 2
125.145 Ensure the full enjoyment of the freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, as per its international human rights commitments (Austria); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 4 and 5
125.152 Allow for more legitimate participation of the opposition in elections, including by guaranteeing freedom of peaceful assembly, of expression and of association (Bahamas); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 2, 4, and 5
125.129 Guarantee the right to freedom of expression and association, including participation in electoral processes (Mexico); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented

Recommendation	Position	Assessment/comments on level of implementation
		Source: Section 4; Section 5
125.130 Ensure the respect of the right to freedom of expression, the press, association and peaceful assembly (Spain); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 4; Section 5, Section 6
125.132 Respect freedom of expression online, including by ending the practice of enforcing Internet shutdowns and taxing the use of social media (Canada); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 3; Section 4; Section 5, Section 6
125.133 End the intimidation and harassment of domestic and international journalists by State authorities and provide a free and safe operating environment for the media (Canada); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 3; Section 4; Section 5, Section 6
125.134 Remove all obstacles to the right to freedom of expression and media freedom (Estonia); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 3; Section 5, Section 6
125.135 Ensure freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and that representatives and supporters of political parties, the media and civil society are not restricted from exercising those rights (Finland); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 3; Section 4; Section 5, Section 6
125.136 Ensure respect for freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, in particular by putting an end to human rights violations perpetrated against members of the political opposition, civil society organizations and human rights defenders (France); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 3; Section 4; Section 5, Section 6
125.139 Protect freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, by adapting the laws restricting those freedoms to international standards and by combating impunity for attacks targeting journalists, human rights defenders and peaceful political actors, in line with target 16.10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (Switzerland);	Noted	Status: Not implemented Source: Section 24 and 5

Recommendation	Position	Assessment/comments on level of implementation
Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1 125.141 Take concrete steps to protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and ensure that human rights defenders, civil society actors, political parties, journalists and the media can operate freely and independently without fear of reprisals (Norway); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Implemented Source: Section
125.97 Conduct prompt, impartial and effective investigations into excessive use of force by security forces and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice in fair trials (Netherlands); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.59 Working with civil society, reform the working practices of the Non-Governmental Organization Bureau to guarantee an open, accountable and vibrant civic space, and publish the details of those reforms (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.60 Abstain from unduly restricting the work of nongovernmental organizations (Germany); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.131 Promote an open civic and political space and uphold the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly by repealing all laws and policies that restrict the activities of human rights defenders (Australia); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.138 End the intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders, civil society organizations and journalists and ensure that they can exist and operate freely and independently (Netherlands); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.140 Protect human rights defenders, civil society actors and journalists (Luxembourg); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	
125.142 Ensure the protection of human rights defenders, journalists, members of the opposition and other civil society actors, allowing them to carry out their work freely (Spain); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented

Recommendation	Position	Assessment/comments on level of implementation
125.147 Take immediate measures to ensure that civil society organizations, human rights defenders and journalists can operate in a safe environment and free from acts of intimidation or reprisals, and that all such complaints are duly investigated, including through the revision of the restrictive provisions of the of the Penal Code (Uruguay); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.148 Investigate thoroughly, transparently, independently and effectively allegations of attacks against human rights defenders, civil society actors, bloggers, journalists and others before, during and after the 2021 presidential election and hold those responsible to account (Belgium); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.149 Continue efforts towards the adoption of the bill on human rights defenders (Côte d'Ivoire); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.150 Work on specific legislative measures to end the harassment of human rights defenders, civil society actors and journalists (Estonia); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.151 Adopt the human rights defenders protection bill (Ireland); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.35 Consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council (Latvia); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.36 Issue a standing invitation to the special procedure mandate holders (Montenegro); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.37 Extend an open invitation to the special procedures (Costa Rica); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented
125.38 Consider extending a standing invitation to mandate holders within the framework of the special procedures of the United Nations system (Iraq); Source of Position: A/HRC/50/11/Add.1	Noted	Status: Not implemented