

Human Rights Council 34th session

Speaker: Pooja Patel - Check against delivery

ITEM 6 – UPR Adoptions; Uganda

Thank you Mr. President,

This is a joint statement *by the International Service for Human Rights and Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (Uganda).*

In its last review, Uganda accepted three recommendations concerning human rights defenders. However, we remain concerned about an emerging trend of implementation of domestic laws and policies restricting defenders' rights - specifically NGOs, defenders of LGBTI rights and journalists. We urge Uganda to repeal these laws and to refrain from criminalising the legitimate activities of defenders.

The 2016 Non-governmental Organisations Law enables the Government to arbitrarily restrict NGO operations, requiring registration with an NGO Bureau and periodic permits. Vague provisions allow the Bureau to refuse the registration of NGOs and restrict defenders working for groups regarded as *illegal*, such as LGBTI persons.

In 2014, the abhorrent Anti-Homosexuality Act was operative for 5 months *until it was struck down*. During that period over 150 cases of violations against LGBTI persons were reported *by Sexual Minorities Uganda*, including arrests, physical violence and harassment – these violations were committed by both State and non-State actors. *These violations continue. The Consortium on Documentation of Violations based on Sex Determination, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation documented 171 violations of the rights of LGBTI persons in 2015, with 78 of those violations perpetrated by State actors.*

The 2013 Public Order Management Act also restricts defenders' activities. This Act has been used to disperse public meetings and protests, and facilitate arrests of political activists.

Finally, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill contains provisions that can restrict the funding of defenders.

The Special Rapporteur on *the situation of* human rights defenders sent a number of communications to the Ugandan Government expressing concern about these laws. Regrettably, in some instances no response was received. We urge Uganda to fully cooperate with Special Procedures *mandate holders*.

We are also concerned about cases of intimidation and reprisals against those accessing international and regional human rights mechanisms. In 2014, the Government delegation accused LGBTI activists of making false accusations, *despite the accuracy of their claims*, in a report on abuses of the rights of LGBTI persons at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

We renew calls for the Government to ensure defenders are able to conduct their legitimate work without intimidation; and investigate and hold police and security officers accountable for attacks against defenders, *including intimidation, harassment and attacks against defenders and journalists during campaigns and into the 2016 post-election period.*