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REPORT ON THE SECOND BREAK-IN AT HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS AND PROMOTION FORUM (HRAPF'S) OFFICES AND THE RESULTANT SIT-IN AT OLD KAMPALA POLICE STATION

14TH FEBRUARY 2018

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1. SUMMARY

On the morning of Friday, 9th February 2018, the offices of Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) were broken into. The two guards on duty were gravely injured using iron bars and batons and the guard dog on duty was also attacked. The intruders were estimated to be nine and after overpowering the guards and the dog, cut the siren to the alarm and broke the lock on the main door of the main office block. This triggered the alarm which sent an emergency signal to HRAPF's security service providers G4S and to the staff authorised to receive such signals. They then broke the door at the back of the main building and gained access to the reception area and the Minority Rights Resource Centre. They however did not proceed further as the entry to the Senior Management members' offices was blocked off with a heavy metallic door, installed after the first break-in, which targeted these particular offices. G4S Secure Solutions responded to the break-in, and shortly afterwards the Police did too after being called by one of HRAPF's neighbours. The intruders did not pick any of the various pieces of electronics that are at the reception area and in the resource centre. The Police headed by the Division Police Commander, Old Kampala Police Division, lifted fingerprints from the scene, and took blood samples and statements from key individuals at the scene. This is the second break-in at the premises in less than two years, with the first break-in in 2016 involving the murder of the guard on duty. The Police did not release a full report of the first break-in and no one was arrested or charged with any offence resulting from that break-in and murder. HRAPF together with other civil society organisations held a press conference on the afternoon of that same Friday and the HRAPF Executive Director announced that HRAPF staff did not feel secure and would thus move their operations to Old Kampala Police Station starting Monday 12th February 2018 until the Police released a comprehensive report of their findings in the first break-in and murder case. Indeed on Monday 12th, HRAPF staff proceeded to the police station and presented a formal demand for the report from the police station, while other staff and partners demonstrated outside the station after being denied entry. This resulted into negotiations leading to a promise of following up with Police headquarters concerning the report, and promising security to HRAPF. HRAPF thus called off the sit-in. HRAPF appreciates the support from its partners, the Police and neighbours during this period. HRAPF also calls upon civil society organisations (CSOs) and the international community to call for full investigations of this case as well as the rampant break-ins into the offices of CSOs.

2. INTRODUCTION

This report contains a detailed description of the events of the morning of Friday, 9th February 2018 when the HRAPF main office premises were broken into for the second time and the security guards on duty injured. It also shows what happened in the immediate aftermath of the discovery of the break-in, the progress of the Police

investigations, the reaction of HRAPF staff to the attack, HRAPF's sit-in at Old Kampala Police Station and the details of HRAPF's agreement with the leadership of Old Kampala Police Division. It also discusses the suspected motive for the break-in, and ends with a number of suggestions to HRAPF's partners, broader civil society and the international community.

3. FACTS OF THE BREAK-IN

This section contains the established facts of the break-in as described by the security guards on duty, the neighbours and the first responders at the scene after the break in.

3.1 Discovery of the break-in

On the morning of Friday 9th February 2018, at about 3:00am, HRAPF's Administrative/Accounts Assistant Mr. Patrick Kyagaba, received a call from one of HRAPF's neighbours informing him that the HRAPF offices had been invaded and that a scuffle was going on between the intruders and the guards on duty. They informed him that the electricity on the premises was off, but they could see torchlight in the compound. He tried contacting the guards on duty but their phones were off. The Administrative/Accounts Assistant then informed HRAPF's Director of Finance and Operations, Mr. Anthony Mutimba, who called G4S' area supervisor. The latter confirmed the attack and that the G4S response team was already in place as well as the Police and that the guards were injured but not dead, and that they had been taken to hospital. He then informed the Executive Director, Mr. Adrian Jjuuko, who was at the time attending a workshop in Naivasha, Kenya. The Executive Director confirmed receiving the emergency signal showing that the main entrance had been breached at 2.48am. He then asked Mr. Mutimba and Mr. Kyagaba to proceed to the office to verify what happened and to ascertain the status of the guards who were on duty at the time of the attack. They found that the team from G4S and the Police had already arrived. The chairperson of the Board of Directors, Mr. Edward Ssemambo and one of the Trustees Ms. Fridah Kewodi arrived soon thereafter. The Executive Director notified key persons including the Director, Human Rights and Legal Services Directorate of the Uganda Police Force, Assistant Inspector General of Police, Erasmus Twaruhukwa; Mr. Hassan Shire Sheikh, Executive Director of Defend Defenders; Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya, Executive Director of the Human Rights Centre, Uganda; and the Board members and trustees of HRAPF.

3.2 The sequence of events

From the statements of the guards, and the neighbours, as well as observations by the early responders, the sequence of events were as follows:

- i) ***Intruders Accessing the compound:*** According to one of the guards, Mr. Sseezi Bwambale, at about 2:00am as he was making his hourly report to

G4S, he saw the guard dog running from the back of the office towards the guardhouse. Before he could react, the intruders pounced on him and started beating him up with iron bars and batons. He estimated the attackers were about nine in number. They attacked him from his left, from the back of the office. A wooden ladder was found at the back of the perimeter wall, which is what the intruders used to access the compound. They were able to bend the razor wire surrounding the perimeter of the compound and made their way inside the compound.

According to the second guard, Mr. Godfrey Okwii, he was at the back of the office, on the right side of the guardhouse at the time the attackers came. The dog noticed movement and ran towards the guardhouse where indeed the attackers were. Before he also knew it, the attackers had also pounced on him. The dog was kept at bay with bright torches that caused it to be disoriented.

ii) Injuring the guards: As the case was in the first break-in, the attackers also first beat up the guards. The guards fought back and this led to a scuffle. They were hit with iron bars and batons, and later tied up in the restrooms that are at the back of the main office block. They were left with two of the nine intruders to guard them as the others broke the main door, and later moved to the back door. According to the guards, the intruders kept speaking to someone on phone who seemed to be directing them, and they also seemed to loudly talk about finding money in the building. They also seemed to warn the person on the other side that last time they failed to get what they wanted, but they would go with it on this occasion. Eventually the two intruders guarding the guards also left and joined the rest, giving an opportunity to the guards to escape. They climbed up the water tank in the compound and jumped into the neighbouring compound.



The bloody scene in the guardhouse



The rest rooms to which the guards were taken and tied up

- iii) Interference with the power supply, CCTV cameras and alarm:*
The intruders asked the guards to show them the point at which power from the mains connected to the offices. They then went to that point and cut off power by damaging the changeover switch and cutting the wire from the mains. They also cut the wires to the CCTV cameras, and disabled the siren.

- iv) *Entry into the offices:*** The intruders started by breaking the lock to the main door of the office and forcing the door open. They managed to pry open the door at 2.48am, approximately forty minutes after they had entered the compound. The opening of the door must have triggered the alarm, which sent the distress signal to G4S and selected HRAPF staff. They were however prevented from using that entrance by the detached burglar proofing. The intruders then went to the backdoor, cut the padlocks and gained access to the reception area. The rest of the offices in the main block are cut off from the reception area using a strong metallic door, and this is what may have prevented them from gaining access to what seemed to be their target, the offices of the senior management members, which are the offices that were also entered during the last break-in. They shattered the control panel for the alarm system, but by then the system had already sent notification messages of the break-in to G4S and to selected staff of HRAPF.
- v) *Exit of the intruders:*** The intruders used both the main gate and the ladder that they used to enter, to exit the premises when the G4S response team arrived at the scene, which was about 3.20am. The team reported seeing at least one person running down the street through the main gate. The neighbours reported that the rest of the intruders went the way they had come, over the fence at the back of the office premises. They did not carry anything from the offices, not even the electronics that litter the reception area.
- vi) *Entry to the premises by the Police and securing the crime scene:*** The G4S team arrived at the premises first and took the injured guards to Nsambya Hospital. The Police were called by one of HRAPF's neighbours and they arrived at the scene at about 3:30am. The Division Police Commander, Assistant Inspector of Police (ASP) Grace Nyangoma also arrived to the scene soon thereafter and the Police secured the scene. They later brought a sniffer dog, which took them through the trail used by the intruders. The trail ended at the entrance to one of the neighbours' gates where there were a lot of footprints. A car, which is thought to have been the gate-away car was seen by one of the guards parked at the same gate. The police lifted fingerprints, collected blood samples and took with them the items connected with the break-in including house breaking implements. The Police also took statements from Mr. Anthony Mutimba and Mr. Patrick Kyagaba. They took photos of the scene and left. It was then that other persons were allowed to access the scene at about 8.00am in the morning.

4. THE EXTENT OF THE INJURIES TO THE GUARDS

The guards sustained deep injuries to the head and legs. Mr. Bwambale sustained injuries to the leg where he was cut by razor wire as he jumped over the perimeter wall and Mr. Okwii sustained a crack on the skull. The attack dog was left exhausted and weak. As at the time of this report, Mr. Bwambale had been discharged from hospital, and Mr. Okwii had been referred for further management to the National Referral Hospital, Mulago.

5. THE EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE TO THE PROPERTY

The following items were damaged at the office:

- i) ***Damage to the doors:*** The main office was accessed through the back door. The glass and metallic parts of the door were broken, and one of the padlocks was forced open. The main door lock was forced open and destroyed as were some of the metallic parts of the door.



The back door of the office that was used to access the offices

- ii) ***Damage to the razor wire:*** The razor wire on the perimeter wall was also partly destroyed.
- iii) ***Damage to the power supply:*** The electricity change over switch was also greatly damaged.

- iv) ***Vandalisation of the alarm system and CCTV cameras:*** The alarm system was vandalised. The wires were cut and the alarm panel was cut and broken. The wires to the CCTV cameras were also cut and the cameras further disabled when the electricity was cut.
- v) ***Items stolen/lost:*** Only a handheld scanner is missing from the guardhouse, and it is not clear whether this was taken by the intruders or by other persons. No other items are missing. This is despite the fact that the intruders managed to access the office for at least 20 minutes before the responders arrived. The reception area and the resource centre had 3 desktop computers, 1 photocopier, 1 printer, 1 scanner, 1 TV screen, and one DSTV Decoder, in addition to the furniture and two bookshelves.

6. THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

This section contains information on what has been done so far in response to the break-in:

6.1 Staff Briefing

When staff reported in the morning, they received the news with shock. After the Police collecting the necessary evidence at the scene, a staff meeting was called and staff briefed on the events, the situation and the next steps. The staff members were urged to stay calm and asked not to speak to the media or give out information they were not sure about. Although they were visibly scared and shaken, they remained calm and helped to re-organise and cleaned up the office premises. The meeting was also attended by some BOD members and trustees.

6.2 Meetings with partners

Impromptu meetings were held with different partners including Defend Defenders, the Defenders Protection Initiative (DPI) and the National Coalition for Human Rights Defenders (NCHRD). The meetings were used to discuss the events leading to the break-in and what could be done in response. Some of the organisations, being security organisations, also assessed the situation on ground and advised on what they thought was the probable chain of events. They also advised on what the next steps should be.

6.3 Speaking to the media and sharing information on social media

Different media houses including NTV, Salt TV, and CBS FM arrived at the scene and interviewed HRAPF's Director, Finance and Operations on what had happened. These stories were run on TV and on radio. In addition, the story was shared on different social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. The sharing solicited a lot of support and encouragement from partners across the world.

6.4 The press conference with other civil society organisations

In addition to the earlier media interviews, a press conference was organised with other civil society organisations to brief the media about the events and the demands from civil society. Different media houses were invited and covered the press conference. The press conference was attended by over 100 people from partner organisations, including: the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI); Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG); Human Rights Network (HURINET); African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV); Women's Organisation Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA); Tranz Network Uganda; Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG); Chapter Four Uganda; Health Gap; Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD); Lady Mermaids Bureau; Rainbow Mirrors Uganda; Queer Kampala International Film Festival; Kuchu Times Uganda; Legal Aid Service Providers Network (LASPNET); Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ); Human Rights Centre; iFreedom Uganda; and Transgender Equality Uganda (TEU).

Mr. Anthony Mutimba read HRAPF' statement on what transpired. The media was addressed by Ms. Sylvia Namubiru Mukasa, the Executive Director of LASPNET; Ms. Sheila Muwanga, the Deputy Director, Programs, FHRI and Trustee, HRAPF; Mr. Samuel Herbert Nsubuga, Director ACTV; Mr. Frank Mugisha, Executive Director, SMUG; and Mr. Muhammad Ndifuna, Chief Executive Officer, HURINET. They all expressed dismay at what had happened and called upon the police to provide the report on the earlier break in as well as the break-ins at the different offices of civil society organisations in the recent past. They also called for full investigations of this break-in. Mr. Adrian Jjuuko, Executive Director of HRAPF announced that from Monday 12th February 2018, HRAPF staff were to work from the safety of Old Kampala Police Station as they could not continue to work in a place where a murder was committed less than two years ago, and where another two people were almost killed without the police providing a report despite the evidence availed to them. Partners held placards calling for investigations and for a stop to the rampant break-ins.

The news item was broadcasted by Chanel 44 TV, NTV, Salt TV, Kaboozi ku Bbiri FM, Radio one FM, Sanyu FM and CBS FM among others.

The video of the press conference was availed by Kuchu Times Uganda and it can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWiRaA2_5d4



A cross section of participants at the press conference



Some of the partners that joined HRAPF for the press conference holding placards demanding for full investigations.

7. THE SIT-IN AT OLD KAMPALA POLICE STATION AND ITS AFTERMATH

HRAPF and partners went through with the promised sit-in at Old Kampala Police station. The sit-in was also blessed by the Board of Directors, which sat in an emergency extra-ordinary board meeting on Saturday 10th February 2018. The sit-in was aimed at putting pressure on the Police to provide the report of the earlier break-in, to ensure commitment to the current investigations, and above all, there was genuine fear among HRAPF staff that a third and immediate attack was possible and therefore there was need for the Police to reassure staff of security.

The sit-in was held on Monday 12th February 2018 by different HRAPF staff and partners. The Police only allowed five HRAPF staff to enter the station with two lawyers. A meeting was held where HRAPF tabled its request for the report formally. The Police was represented by the Deputy Regional Police Commander, Kampala Metropolitan North, Superintendent of Police (SP) Samuel Asimwe; the Division Police Commander, ASP Grace Nyangoma, Old Kampala Police Division; Deputy ASP Isaac Sembera, the Officer in Charge, Crime Investigations Department, Old Kampala Police Station; and Deputy ASP Abutalib Kapchemut, the Officer in Charge, Crime Intelligence, Old Kampala Police Division. HRAPF was represented by the Executive Director, Mr. Adrian Jjuuko; the Acting Deputy Executive Director, Ms. Joaninne Nanyange; the Director Finance and Operations, Mr. Anthony Mutimba; the Head of the Research and Advocacy Division, Ms. Flavia Zalwango and one of HRAPF's Trustees, Ms. Fridah Kewodi. It also had two lawyers to formally represent it: Mr. Ladislaus Rwakafuzi and Mr. Francis Tumwesige.

HRAPF indicated its intention to sit-in at the station until the station provided the full report of the investigations into the last break-in at HRAPF. HRAPF also asked for protection by the Police, and reassurance of the HRAPF staff that they would be secured. The Police representatives informed HRAPF that the file for the first break-in had been called by the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and Crime Intelligence and as such, the Division was not in a position to provide the report. They however promised to follow up formally and provide a response. It was agreed that HRAPF's lawyers should write formally to headquarters asking for the report upon which letter the Division would act to ask for the report from headquarters and give feedback to HRAPF. They also stated that the whole team was new and were not part of the old team that was there at the time of the first break-in. They promised to fully investigate the case and follow up on all leads.

The Police also promised that in the interim, two armed police guards would secure HRAPF's premises every night until the investigations were complete. The Division Police Commander and a team of other officers also agreed to address HRAPF staff and reassure them of the Police commitment to secure their place of work. As a result of

these concessions, the sit-in was called off as the Police is given time to work on its promises.



The Deputy Regional Police Commander for the Northern Kampala Metropolitan Police Region (First left) and the Division Police Commander Old Kampala Police station (third left) with HRAPF staff and lawyers after the meeting

In the meantime, the rest of the HRAPF staff who were not allowed inside as well as partners demanded entrance to the police station and were repulsed by the Police. Journalists were also stopped from coming closer to the police station. The group then resorted to carrying placards and matching, which the police also stopped. One of the HRAPF staff, Mr. Eriya Nawenuwe was arrested by the police, but he was later released as part of the agreement between the HRAPF team and the Police.



Police officers trying to stop HRAPF staff and partners from participating in the sit-in



Some HRAPF staff and partners addressing the media during the sit-in at Old Kampala Police Station



HRAPF Legal Officer, Betty Balisalamu facing the police during the sit-in (Photo by Frederic Noy)

The Division Police Commander indeed lived up to her promises and came in person to assure HRAPF staff of security. She came with the Community Liaison Officer, SP Enoch Tumwesige; the Officer in Charge of Operations, C/ASP Henry Mwine; the Officer in Charge, Namirembe Police Post, Anguyo Fred and the Parish coordinator for crime preventers, Ssekabira Siraje. The meeting was cordial and staff expressed their concerns and also appreciation for the gesture.



A group photo after the police officers addressed HRAPF staff

8. PROGRESS OF THE POLICE INVESTIGATIONS SO FAR

The crime scene was well managed and the police collected a lot of evidence. Statements were taken from some staff members including the Executive Director. There has been no more communication from the police on the progress of the investigations. Statements had also not been taken from the two security guards that were on duty or the neighbours that heard the intruders and reported the intrusion in the first place. The DPC and her team promised that all leads would be followed. HRAPF remains optimistic that the team will follow through on their promises and investigate the case to its conclusion as well as bring the culprits to book.

9. SUSPECTED MOTIVE OF THE BREAK-IN

It remains hard to know or speculate about what the motive of the attack was. Like for the previous attack, this too did not seem like an ordinary robbery. The intruders had access to computers and other electronic gadgets but they did not take any of these. This makes it improbable that the intruders were after property or money. Since the last attack was never properly solved, it remains unclear what the motive of the break-ins are. There are speculations that it could be the work done by HRAPF, but the organisation has not received work related threats in the recent past. The two guards say that the intruders kept asking them the whereabouts of money in the office and also

were apparently on phone asking the person they were calling to describe where the money was. The guards however feel that this seemed to be intended for their ears in order to disguise the motive. It is improbable that a thief who is interested in money would not take electronics. Again the guards state that the attackers were loudly speaking about the incomplete mission last time, and that they were ready to complete it this time round. For now, it remains unclear what the motives of the attacks are.

10. STAFF REACTION TO THE BREAK-IN

Staff members were visibly shaken by the break-in especially this being the second in less than two years. The most frustrating part for staff is the fact that no one knows what the motives of these two attacks are. This leaves staff members wondering about their safety and whether it is the work they do that is putting them in danger or not. Some staff members reported failing to sleep because they are worried and scared. A debrief was held for staff where they shared their feelings about the incident and what they thought the motives of the attacks are. They were then given a week off to recuperate and recover from the incident before resumption of work. It was also resolved that staff will get access to psychosocial support and also have a formal forum to discuss the incident as the case was for the first break-in.

11. HRAPF'S CURRENT EFFORTS TO RESTORE ITS SYSTEMS

HRAPF with the support of partners is currently working to rebuild its security systems. Fundraising efforts to this end are going on, and the management is using the week when staff are off to reconnect the broken CCTV and alarm systems. The Uganda Police together with G4S are providing night security. With support from partners, HRAPF is sure to beef up its security. Long-term solutions are also being considered and assessments for such long-term support are being done. We thank our partners for this support. The Board of Directors is due to sit again on Saturday to discuss the more permanent solutions further.

12. HRAPF'S SUGGESTIONS TO PARTNERS FOR SUPPORT

Like was the case in the first break-in, HRAPF recommends the following to its partners:

- i) Support the organisation during its period of reconstruction and rebuilding of its security systems and staff morale. Funds are still needed to support HRAPF. For individual donations to HRAPF, please visit <http://hrapf.org/donate/>

- ii) Speak out against the attack and call upon the Government to fully investigate this attack and the earlier one, and to provide answers to HRAPF, G4S and the family of the deceased guard, Emmanuel Arituha as well to Mr. Bwambale and Mr. Okwii.
- iii) Call upon the state to investigate the rampant break-ins at the offices of Civil society organisations
- iv) Call upon the Police to finalise investigations and to provide updates to HRAPF and G4S.
- v) Call for the protection of human rights organisations and human rights defenders generally.

13. APPRECIATION

HRAPF sends its appreciation to the Uganda Police Force, particularly the Division Police Commander of Old Kampala Police Division, Grace Nyangoma for the professionalism exhibited since the incident happened, and for working closely with HRAPF afterwards. We also appreciate our two guards, Mr. Seezi Bwambale and Mr. Godfrey Okwii for fighting the intruders in order to keep HRAPF secure. We wish them quick recovery. We thank our security service provider G4S for the emergency response and providing medical support to the injured guards; all our partners who came to commiserate with us, attended the press conference and braved the sit-in at Old Kampala Police Station; our neighbours who called the police and also called us and in a large measure helped to foil the break-in; and our staff members for their commitment to HRAPF and its work, even in the face of such adversity.

14. CONCLUSION

HRAPF is thankful for the endless support from partners, friends and colleagues and for standing with us in this difficult time. We are grateful for the messages of support. We call upon the Police and the state to thoroughly investigate these incidents and provide adequate protection to human rights defenders in the country and the civil society sector.

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