



CALLING FOR AN END TO INTIMIDATION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST UGANDANS

Statement by the Uganda Feminist Forum on the Suppression of Civic Voice and Targeting of Women Activists in Uganda

The Uganda Feminist Forum expresses its deep concern for, and unwavering solidarity with all women, activists, human rights defenders, journalists, organisers, lawyers, community leaders, and citizens who continue to face intimidation, unlawful arrests, surveillance, office raids, abductions, threats and other forms of state repression since the 2026 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections..

Uganda is witnessing an alarming escalation in attacks on civic freedoms and human rights that evokes memories of some of the darkest chapters of our country's history. We refuse the normalisation of military violence, threats, abuse of power, and public intimidation as tools of governance. Uganda cannot be ruled through silence and fear, and no public official, military or civilian, is above the Constitution.

We are particularly disturbed by the latest incidents in a sustained pattern of violence, intimidation, unlawful arrests, detentions and public threats directed at women by the military under the leadership of the Chief of Defence Forces, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba. These attacks are not isolated; they represent a broader assault on civic space, democratic participation, and the rights of women to lead, organise and speak without fear.

Mirroring the dark days of the Idi Amin regime, we have watched with deep concern the latest in a long list, including:

- Dr Miria Matembe, a leading politician, women's rights activist and outspoken critic of human rights abuses by the military, was charged with sectarianism on 30th June 2026 following a raid on her home on 24th June 2026. A visibly weak Dr. Matembe was denied bail and remanded. On 1st July 2026, Dr. Matembe was granted bail. We demand that the same justice be done for all victims of politically motivated detentions who are currently languishing behind bars despite being entitled to bail as mandatorily directed by the constitution.
- On 28th June 2026, Major Kainerugaba ordered the shutdown of the Nation Media Group - Uganda's Monitor Newspaper, NTV, Dembe FM, KFM, Spark TV and The East African. Managing Director Susan Nsibirwa is working from an undisclosed location.



- Feminist activist Eunice Musiime was arbitrarily detained alongside Dr. Sarah Bireete, a human rights activist and rule of law defender on 28th June as well.
- On 25th June 2026, the offices of civil society organisation, Akina Mama wa Afrika were unlawfully raided by security operatives.
- Kenyan lawyer and veteran politician Martha Karua was denied entry at Entebbe International Airport and declared persona non grata on the orders of the CDF, on 22nd June 2026, She serves as Lead Counsel for Dr. Kizza Besigye and Obed Lutale, who have been illegally detained since November 2024 on treason charges. Counsel Karua was travelling to attend the hearing of fellow Lead Counsel and Former Lord Mayor Erias Lukwago, who was himself abducted from his home and subjected to horrific torture, the details of which were shared on X (Twitter), by the CDF.

These incidents reveal a dangerous escalation in the use of state machinery to intimidate citizens and suppress civic engagement in Uganda at all levels. They also reveal the gendered nature of repression in Uganda today, where women who speak, lead, defend rights and occupy public space are subjected to targeted humiliation, threats, surveillance and punishment.

Lasting peace can only be built when all voices are acknowledged and welcomed. Democracy can be strengthened by encouraging civic participation and expression rather than criminalising and suppressing dissent. Justice is upheld by protecting and enabling those who defend human rights, expose injustice and hold power to account, not by targeting them. An inclusive, prosperous and free future requires an environment where women are respected, protected and valued members of society, not one where they are intimidated, threatened and punished for leading, speaking out, organising and occupying public space.

The future of Uganda cannot be built through fear, unlawful arrests, intimidation, or closing the very spaces where people should express themselves and participate in governance. A nation that undermines the leadership and civic participation of women weakens the very foundations of its own development, governance, moral and social cohesion.

To attack women who lead is to silence communities and undermine the possibility of a democratic and just society. A just and democratic society is one in which every person, especially women and other historically marginalised groups, can exercise their rights, express their views, organise collectively, and contribute to shaping their country's future without fear. Protecting civic space and defending the freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly are not optional; they are indispensable to building a resilient, democratic, and equitable nation.



We therefore call upon the President of the Republic of Uganda, who has so far remained silent, the Parliament, security agencies, all public institutions mandated to uphold the Constitution, protect citizens and defend the rule of law, and all responsible state institutions to:

1. Immediately cease the militarisation of civic and political life, including public threats, media intimidation, office raids, arbitrary arrests, abductions and unlawful restrictions on movement of women activists, human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, organisers, and civic actors. We must return to rule of law and not decree from the CDF for the sake of all Ugandans, including himself.
2. Guarantee the safety, dignity, and due process rights of all persons arrested or detained, and ensure that all allegations of abuse are independently and transparently investigated.
3. Ensure constitutionalism and rule of law prevail through protecting the constitutional rights to freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, access to information, and civic participation.
4. End the targeting of women activists, women human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers, opposition actors and civil society leaders for their political views, civic work or association with movements for justice
5. Hold accountable, through independent and transparent processes, all state and security actors responsible for unlawful arrests, torture, threats, abductions, raids, harassment and other abuses of power.
6. Create conditions where women can participate fully and safely in Uganda's political, civic, and public life.

We call on Ugandans, regional bodies, feminist movements, human rights institutions, diplomatic missions and international actors to speak clearly and act urgently. Silence in the face of repression only strengthens impunity. Uganda belongs to all its people. Uganda's future must be built on justice, freedom, accountability, dignity, constitutionalism and the full participation of its people.

A Nation that Silences its Bravest Daughters Betrays its Future.

For God and Our Country!