



Excerpt:

2008 Human Rights Reports: Uganda

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
February 25, 2009

The government's human rights record remained poor. Although there were improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained, including unlawful killings by security forces; mob violence; torture and abuse of suspects by security forces; poor prison conditions; official impunity; arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on the right to a fair trial and on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion; sexual abuse of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps; restrictions on opposition parties; electoral irregularities; official corruption; violence and discrimination against women and children, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual abuse of children; trafficking in persons; violence and discrimination against persons with disabilities and homosexuals; restrictions on labor rights; and forced labor, including child labor.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

In May the Media Council blocked the screening of two films--Watermelon Woman and Rag Tag--at a film festival in Kampala for perceived promotion of homosexuality.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Homosexuals faced discrimination and legal restrictions. It is illegal for homosexuals to engage in sexual acts, based on a legal provision that criminalizes "carnal acts against the order of nature" with a penalty of life imprisonment, although no homosexual has been charged under the law. Public resentment of homosexuality sparked significant public debate during the year. The government took a strong position against the practice. The local NGO SMUG protested alleged police harassment of several members for their vocal stand against sexual discrimination.

On June 4, police arrested SMUG activists Pepe Julian Onziema, Valentine Kalende, and Usaam Mukwaya for trespassing. The activists, who did not have the required conference credentials, bypassed security at the HIV/AIDS Implementers' Conference in Kampala to protest the government's lack of funding to combat HIV/AIDS in the homosexual community. On June 6, the three were charged with criminal trespass and released on bail. On August 15, the government dropped the case.

On July 25, police in Kampala arrested SMUG activist Usaam Mukwaya without charge and released him the following day. On September 24, Mukwaya filed a complaint with the UHRC, alleging that he was tortured and humiliated during his detention in a safe house and that the

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119030.htm>

arrest was arbitrary. The case, which received international attention, was pending before the UHRC tribunal at year's end.

On September 10, security forces arrested SMUG members George Oundo and Brenda Kiiza from Nansana, a Kampala suburb. On September 18, the suspects were charged with indecent practices and released on police bond.

On December 22, a High Court judge ruled that the government in 2006 had violated the privacy rights of SMUG chair Juliet Mukasa, who claimed that local government officials illegally searched her home in 2005. The High Court directed the government to pay 3 million shillings (\$1,500) to compensate Mukasa for violation of privacy and 10 million shillings (\$5,000) to her partner Yvonne Oyoo for humiliation, injury, and trauma. The court also ordered the state to pay for their court costs.

International and local NGOs, in cooperation with the government, sponsored public awareness campaigns that aimed to eliminate the stigma of HIV/AIDS. In April the ILO reported in its publication "Saving Lives, Protecting Jobs" that workers in the country were becoming more supportive of their HIV-positive colleagues. However, a July meeting of HIV/AIDS-positive teachers, officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports, and the National Teachers Union concluded that HIV positive teachers suffered stigma and discrimination inside and outside of school settings; the meeting was sponsored by UNESCO, the World Health Organization, and other organizations.

Counselors encouraged patients to be tested with their partners and family so that they all received information about living with HIV/AIDS. Persons living with HIV/AIDS formed support groups to promote awareness in their communities.