

25th April 2011

To the Government of Uganda, Members of Opposition and
Distinguished Stake Holders.

RE: CSO LETTER ON THE HANDLING OF THE WALK TO WORK
CAMPAIGN AND DEMONSTRATIONS

We, the undersigned Civil Society Organizations, would like to protest the way freedoms and rights of Ugandans have been trampled upon and flagrantly violated in the ongoing demonstrations against high food and fuel prices in Uganda. The State's response to the citizen's exercise of the freedom of demonstration has resulted into violations of rights of innocent Ugandans which are guaranteed under the Constitution and International Human rights law Conventions and Covenants to which Uganda is party. Specifically, we condemn in the strongest terms the following acts and violations.

1. The refusal of state agencies including the Uganda Police Force (UPF) and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) to let peaceful demonstrators participate in the 'Walk to Work', 'Walk to Pray', demonstration which is their guaranteed right thus violating their freedom of movement and expression guaranteed under article 29(2) and article 40(2) of the Ugandan Constitution, article 13(1) of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and article 12 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The act also violates the right to associate and the right to peacefully demonstrate as guaranteed under article 29(1) of the Ugandan Constitution, and Articles 21 and 22 of ICCPR.
2. The arrest and detention of demonstrators undermines the provisions of article 23 of the Uganda constitution which protects personal liberty and prohibits arrest and detention of individuals unless circumstances laid out as exceptions are met. We are concerned that the arrests and detentions have gone beyond the exemptions envisaged under the constitution.
3. In the same vein, we recognize the fact that civil rights are not absolute and that their enjoyment can be limited in line with Article 43 of the constitution of Uganda. However we would like to note that the provisions of Article 43 should be fully adhered to. We call upon the state to follow Article 43(2) (c) which provides that suspension of civil liberties should be in accordance with what is acceptable in a free and democratic society. We note that the use of Article 43 by state agencies to suspend civil rights in

the prevailing circumstances do not meet the spirit and form of Article 43(2) of the Uganda Constitution.

4. We call upon the government to stop the unjustified extremism and, in particular, the security agencies' brutal 'methods' in handling the demonstrators as this is a threat to the peace and stability in the country and should be halted forthwith.

In view of the above therefore, we call upon the Government of Uganda at all levels and more particularly the Uganda Police Force and the Uganda Peoples' Defense Forces to:

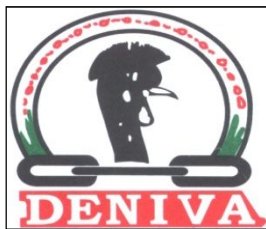
- Play a decisive leadership role in denouncing any brutal, inhumane methods of law enforcement that are contrary to the Constitution of Uganda and internationally recognized human rights standards.
- Place its primary attention on addressing the concerns of the masses on the escalating commodity prices through engagement and communication.
- To reduce current public expenditure mode on administrative, in favor of more pressing social issues such as curbing inflation, subsidizing food prices and reducing taxes on fuel as well as creating employment opportunities and supporting long term coping mechanisms for vulnerable groups.
- Investigate, identify and prosecute the members of the security agencies that perpetrated these human rights violations.
- Arrest, investigate, and prosecute all those involved in illegal acts during demonstrations including those who demolish property, those using violence, looting and all illegal acts carried out during the demonstration
- Expeditiously arraign any suspects of wrong doing before the courts of law and allow them access to their lawyers and next of Kin in accordance with the notions of a fair hearing
- Desist from attacking the media and engage all stakeholders, including the political parties, to discuss the national social issues prevalent in the country.
- Explore the possibility of the Police and Political Parties and the Action For Human Rights Group using the Demonstrations Guidelines developed by Uganda Human Rights Commission and the wider civil society as a guiding principle in the management of public order.
- We also call for an independent investigation that the tear gas used in dispersing the crowd in the last few weeks had expired hence creating health risks for children and pregnant women.
- We also call upon all the citizens and members of the opposition to exercise their rights while adhering to their responsibilities of ensuring the security and the enjoyment of

rights of other citizens. We thus condemn acts of hooliganism and destruction of property arising out of the intended peaceful 'Walk to Work' campaign.

- Foster a spirit of dialogue and constructive engagement in matters affecting the public in order to ensure an environment in which all human rights are respected and be tolerant and accept constructive criticism from all stakeholders.

Signed by;

UGANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK (UWONET), HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE (HRCU), HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK FOR JOURNALISTS-UGANDA (HRNJ-UGANDA), HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK UGANDA (HURINET-U), AFRICAN CENTRE FOR TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE VICTIMS(ACTV), ACTION AID, CITIZENS COALITION FOR ELECTRAL DEMOCRACY IN Uganda (CCEDU). DEVELOPMENT NETWORK FOR INDEGENEOUS ORGANIZATIONS (DENIVA),



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