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First UA: 100/24 Index: AFR 59/8779/2024 Uganda of November 26, 2024

UGANDA OPPOSITION POLITICIAN CHARGED AFTER ABDUCTION

On November 16, Dr. Kizza Besigye, a prominent Ugandan opposition politician and former presidential candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), was abducted in Nairobi, Kenya. He reappeared on November 20, when he was brought before a military court in Kampala, Uganda. Alongside FDC member Haji Obeid Lutale, he was charged with security-related offenses and unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition. Dr. Besigye was remanded to Luzira Maximum Security Prison in Kampala, where he remains detained while investigations continue. His abduction violated international human rights law and ignored fair trial protections required in extradition processes. Dr. Besigye must be released immediately, and his rights must be upheld.

Write to the Ugandan President urging him to:

- Immediately release Dr Besigye due to the nature of his abduction, which was in clear violation of both international human rights law and the process of extradition with its requisite fair trial protections;
- Ensure a prompt, impartial and effective investigation is carried out into Dr Besigye's abduction, and to bring those suspected of responsibility to account in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

Write to:

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

Parliament of Uganda

Parliament Avenue

Kampala, Uganda

Email: info@statehouse.go.ug

X: @kagutamuseveni

Send copies to: press@statehouse.go.ug

Salutation: Your Excellency:

And copy:

Mr. Allan Kajik

Deputy Head of Mission & Acting High Commissioner

High Commission for the Republic of Uganda

350 Sparks Street, Suite 601

Ottawa, ON K1R 7S8

Tel: (613) 789-7797 Fax: (613) 789-8909

Email: ottawa@mofa.go.ug

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr. Kizza Besigye is a Ugandan physician, opposition politician, and four-time presidential candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). He ran against President Museveni in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016, challenging decades of autocratic rule. Despite his persistence, Besigye has faced relentless persecution for his political stance.

On November 16, 2024, Dr. Besigye was last seen in an apartment complex in Nairobi, Kenya. Shortly after, he became unreachable. Days later, his family confirmed he was detained in a military jail in Kampala, Uganda, with no access to his lawyers or family. According to his legal team, this abduction was a coordinated effort between Kenyan and Ugandan authorities. However, Kenya has denied any involvement.

Dr. Besigye appeared before the Makindye General Court Martial, alongside FDC member Haji Obeid Lutale. Despite being a civilian, he was charged with security offenses and unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition. The Ugandan Constitutional Court ruled in 2006 that military courts lack jurisdiction over such cases, yet the government continues to use them against political opponents. Amnesty International also condemns military trials for civilians as inherently unfair.

Dr. Besigye's trial exemplifies the misuse of military courts to silence dissent. Uganda's Constitutional Court has twice ruled against this practice, in 2006 and 2021, under the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) Act. Despite these rulings, the government continues to exploit military courts to target opposition figures.

Dr. Besigye's abduction is not an isolated incident. In November 2005, he was arrested on fabricated charges of terrorism and illegal possession of weapons ahead of the 2006 elections. In February 2016, he was arbitrarily detained under "preventive arrest" for questioning the legitimacy of the presidential election and vowing to challenge the results in court.

These incidents reflect a broader pattern of repression in Uganda, where opposition members from the FDC and National Unity Platform (NUP) face wrongful charges. The government continues to use legal and extrajudicial means to silence dissent, undermining democracy and human rights.

Please take action as soon as possible until May 25, 2025! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.

