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First UA: 2/26 Index: AFR 59/0598/2026 Uganda of January 12, 2026

UGANDA

DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF A HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

On December 30, 2025, Ugandan human rights lawyer Dr. Sarah Bireete was arbitrarily arrested. Authorities are holding her at Luzira Upper Prison, in the women's section.

On January 2, 2026, prosecutors charged her with unlawfully obtaining or sharing personal data. That same day, the court delayed her bail hearing until January 21, 2026. This delay goes against bail guidelines, which require courts to decide bail requests right away.

Dr. Bireete is a respected lawyer and expert in constitutional governance. She is being punished for her peaceful human rights work.

Amnesty International calls on Ugandan authorities to release Dr. Sarah Bireete immediately and respect her rights.

Write to the President of Uganda urging him to:

- Drop the charges against Dr. Sarah Bireete immediately and unconditionally and release her from detention
- End the misuse of the criminal justice system, including the bond system that is used by the authorities to keep human rights defenders and government critics in prolonged detention.

Write to:

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

Parliament of Uganda

Parliament Avenue

Kampala, Uganda

Email: info@statehouse.go.ug

X: @kagutamuseveni

Copies to: press@statehouse.go.ug

Salutation: *Dear President Museveni,*

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. Sarah Bireete leads the Centre for Constitutional Governance and chairs the East and Horn of Africa Election Observation Network. This regional network brings together election observer groups from eight countries. Its goal is to improve election standards, strengthen cooperation, and support shared learning across the region.

Dr. Bireete speaks openly about electoral issues and governance. Authorities have not clearly explained where the charges against her come from or what actions led to her arrest.

Police arrested Dr. Bireete without telling her why. They did not show her an arrest warrant. Officers first held her at Nateete Police Station for four days. This went beyond the 48-hour limit set by Uganda's Constitution and violated her right to liberty and a fair trial.

After that, authorities transferred her to Luzira Upper Prison, in the women's section. She remains there while she waits for trial.

Amnesty International has [documented a growing crackdown in Uganda](#) ahead of the elections scheduled for January 15, 2026. Authorities have targeted opposition members, their supporters, and people who criticise the government. These actions have made it harder for people to speak out, organise, or protest peacefully.

Since September 2025, authorities have carried out more than 400 arbitrary arrests. Some detained people have also faced torture and other ill-treatment. Dr. Bireete's detention takes place in this wider pattern of repression.

Please take action as soon as possible until June 12, 2026. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.