

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Uganda: Teargas and bullets used against peaceful protestors**

The Ugandan authorities must rein in its security forces and immediately investigate the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters, Amnesty International said today amid reports that one woman was seriously injured when security officials moved to disperse various protests in the capital city Kampala, and other towns on Thursday.

Police and officers identified as military police fired live ammunition and teargas into crowds of protesters who were attempting to walk to work in protest at fuel price and other cost of living rises.

Dozens of people were injured in confrontations between protesters and police. Opposition leader Kizza Besigye was shot in the hand and taken to hospital for treatment.

Amnesty International urged the Ugandan authorities to immediately withdraw the blanket ban on peaceful protests currently in force and to open a fair and credible investigation into the events. The organisation urged the authorities to ensure people are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, and to hold any police officer or other law enforcement official, including those with operational command, found to have been involved in any human rights violations accountable.

Medical officers in the hospital in which Kizza Besigye, leader of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party and a presidential candidate in February's elections, had gone to seek treatment told the local media that he sustained an injury to his finger caused by a rubber bullet.

Hundreds of people were arrested, including six newly-elected members of parliament, the Kampala Mayor and over twenty opposition activists. The members of parliament were taken to various courts in Kampala and other areas where they were charged with a number of offences including failure to comply with lawful orders, inciting violence and participating in unlawful assemblies. At least one Member of Parliament, Betty Namboze, was denied bail.

On Monday 11 April another protest was disrupted when police fired tear gas into people taking part in the protests.

The Ugandan police have maintained a complete ban on all forms of public assembly and demonstration since general elections in February 2011, citing public security. The ban has disproportionately affected demonstrations and rallies which appear to express dissent against the outcome of the election and current government policies.