

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION POLITICIAN CHARGED AFTER ABDUCTION

On 16 November, Dr Kizza Besigye, Ugandan opposition politician and former presidential candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) political party, was abducted in Nairobi, Kenya. He resurfaced on 20 November when he was arraigned in a military court in Kampala, Uganda, where he was charged alongside FDC member Haji Obeid Lutale with offences relating to security and unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition. He was remanded to Luzira Maximum Security Prison in Kampala, Uganda, where he continues to be detained as investigations into these allegations continue. Dr Besigye must be immediately released 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.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
Parliament of Uganda
Parliament Avenue
Kampala, Uganda
Email: info@statehouse.go.ug
X: @kagutamuseveni
Copies to: press@statehouse.go.ug

Dear President Museveni,

I am writing to express grave concern about the abduction of Ugandan opposition politician and former presidential candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), Dr Kizza Besigye from Nairobi, Kenya, on 16 November 2024 and his rendition to Uganda. His whereabouts were unknown and he was unreachable until he was arraigned in a military court in Kampala, Uganda, on 20 November, despite being a civilian. He was charged alongside FDC member Haji Obeid Lutale with offences relating to security and unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition.

This is not the first time that Dr Besigye has been unlawfully arrested and detained. In November 2005, he was unlawfully arrested and detained on military charges of terrorism-related offences and illegal possession of weapons in the run up to the 2006 presidential elections. In February 2016, he was arbitrarily arrested and detained under powers of "preventive arrest" for "utterances and activities that amount to incitement to violence and defiance of the law" when he said that he would challenge the outcome of the 2016 presidential election in the Uganda Supreme Court.

Dr Besigye's abduction is clearly part of a wider pattern of increasing widespread repression. Based on the frequency by which Ugandan authorities wrongly bring charges against political opponents, there is also reason to be concerned that the charges against him may be politically motivated.

In light of the above, I urge your government 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.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr Kizza Besigye is a Ugandan physician, opposition politician and a former presidential candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) who unsuccessfully ran against President Museveni in the 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 presidential elections.

According to Dr Kizza Besigye's lawyers, he was last seen at around 4.30pm on 16 November in an apartment complex in Nairobi, Kenya, and was subsequently unreachable until family members confirmed that he was being held at a military jail in Kampala with no access to his family or lawyers. Dr Besigye's lawyers claim that the abduction is the result of collusion between Kenyan and Ugandan authorities, but the Kenyan government has denied involvement.

Dr Besigye was arraigned alongside FDC member Haji Obeid Lutale at Makindye General Court Martial despite being a civilian and charged with offences relating to security and the unlawful possession of firearms and ammunition. According to a 2006 ruling by the Constitutional Court of Uganda, military courts have no jurisdiction to try cases of terrorism and unlawful possession of firearms. Similarly, Amnesty International does not consider trials by military courts of civilians to be fair.

The Ugandan Government has a history of wrongfully charging political opponents including from the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and the National Unity Platform (NUP). This is a tool of repression that has been used to clamp down on members of the opposition. This is despite 2 rulings by the Constitutional Court of Uganda prohibiting the misuse of military courts to try civilians under the Uganda People Defence Forces (UPDF) Act in 2021 and the 2006 ruling on military related charges.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 25 May 2025

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Kizza Besigye (he/him)