



## Joint statement: Ugandan authorities must immediately release Dr Kizza Besigye, Hajj Obeid Lutale, Eron Kiiza and others unlawfully detained

18 days have passed since the Supreme Court of Uganda ruled on 31 January 2025 that the trial of civilians before military courts in criminal cases is unconstitutional and that any such cases must be transferred to ordinary courts. Despite the Supreme Court decision and legal applications for the release of Kizza Besigye, Hajj Obeid Lutale, lawyer Eron Kiiza and others, Ugandan authorities have disregarded court orders and continue to arbitrarily deprive them of their liberty. Kizza Besigye's health has seriously deteriorated after nearly a week on hunger strike to protest his detention.

We, the undersigned organizations, condemn the militarization of justice in Uganda and escalating government repression ahead of the 2026 general elections and call on the Ugandan authorities to immediately release Kizza Besigye, Hajj Obeid Lutale, Eron Kiiza and others unlawfully detained. The abduction and rendition of Kizza Besigye and Hajj Obeid Lutale blatantly violated international human rights law and the principles of extradition treaties. The conviction of lawyer, Eron Kiiza, by General Court Martial for "contempt of court" and sentencing to nine months imprisonment without a fair trial is brazen targeting of a lawyer in the line of duty.

On 16 November 2024, Kizza Besigye and Hajj Obeid Lutale were abducted from Nairobi, Kenya adding to the growing and worrying trend of transnational repression in Kenya where foreign critics from countries, including Ethiopia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Turkey and Uganda have been abducted in Kenya. The Kenyan government must take action to stop this, investigate and prosecute those responsible and ensure full reparation to the victims and their families.

Accordingly, we call on the Ugandan authorities to:

1. Respect the Supreme Court decision and immediately free Kizza Besigye, Hajj Obeid Lutale, Lawyer Eron Kiiza and others unlawfully detained;

2. Take immediate action to prevent any grave harm to or loss of life of Kizza Besigye, Hajj Obeid Lutale, Lawyer Eron Kiiza and all others detained;
3. Promptly, thoroughly, impartially, effectively, independently, and transparently review all cases of civilians on trial in the General Court Martial and immediately cease prosecution of civilians in military courts and release all individuals found to be arbitrarily deprived of their liberty in Uganda's civilian and military prisons;
4. Promptly, thoroughly, impartially, independently, transparently, and effectively investigate death threats against Kizza Besigye by President Yoweri Museveni's son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who is the Chief of Defence Forces of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces and take urgent action to protect his right to life;
5. Immediately propose amendments to the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act, 2005 as ordered by the Supreme Court to align it to constitutional principles on due process (i.e., independence, impartiality, the right to appeal, for instance) and clarifying the limited jurisdiction of military courts under the Constitution of Uganda and international human rights law.

We further call on the Kenyan authorities to:

1. Acknowledge that abductions and renditions have been committed in Kenya, potentially constituting crimes under international law, and should be promptly, thoroughly, impartially, and transparently investigated and those suspected of responsibility prosecuted.
2. End abductions and renditions in Kenya and commit to take effective measures to guarantee non-repetition.

We, the undersigned organizations, also take this opportunity to invite all to join us in a march to the Uganda High Commission in Nairobi and the National Assembly on 21 February to present a petition for justice for Dr Kizza Besigye, Hajj Obeid Lutale, Eron Kiiza and others unlawfully detained.

**Signatories:**

Amnesty International

Centre for Strategic Litigation (CSL)

Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU)

International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) - Kenya

Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)

Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union (KMPU)

Law Society of Kenya (LSK)

Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU)

Mwanzo.org

East Africa Law Society

Vocal Africa

Change Tanzania Movement