

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER ARBITRARILY DETAINED

On 30 December 2025, Dr. Sarah Bireete, a Ugandan human rights lawyer and constitutional governance expert, was arbitrarily arrested and is currently being arbitrarily detained at Luzira Upper Prison Women's section. On 2 January 2026, she was charged with unlawfully obtaining or disclosing personal data. On the same day, the court decided to adjourn the bail application to 21 January 2026 in order to enable prosecutor to respond. This is despite bail guidelines requiring an immediate determination of such requests. Amnesty International calls on the Ugandan authorities to grant her immediate release.

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](https://twitter.com/kagutamuseveni)

Copies to: press@statehouse.go.ug

Dear President Museveni,

I am writing to bring your attention to the case of human rights lawyer **Dr. Sarah Bireete** who was arbitrarily arrested at her home in Kampala on 30 December 2025. At the time of her arrest, she was neither informed of the reason for the arrest nor presented with an arrest warrant. She was first held at Nateete police station for four days, beyond the 48 hour-limit foreseen by the Constitution, in violation of the prohibition of unlawful detention and fair trial standards. She was then transferred to Luzira Upper Prison Women's section, where she remains detained pending trial.

On 2 January 2026, Dr. Sarah Bireete - who as well as being a lawyer and expert on constitutional governance - was charged at the Buganda Road Court with the offense of 'Unlawful obtaining or disclosing of personal data.' The charge appears to be associated with Dr Sarah Bireete publicly discussing information related to the National Voter's Register without the consent of the Electoral Commission. It should be noted that the National Voters' Register is a public document and Dr Sarah Bireete's views are protected by her right to freedom of expression. On 2 January 2026, the court's decision to adjourn her bail hearing to 21 January 2026 violated her constitutional rights, as well as fair trial standards, since national bail guidelines require an immediate determination of requests to be released on bail pending trial.

Dr. Sarah Bireete's arbitrary arrest and detention appear to be part of a wider pattern of the Uganda's authorities to increase widespread repression against government critics and political opposition.

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

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr. Sarah Bireete is the Director for Center for Constitutional Governance and the Chairperson of the East and Horn of Africa Election Observation Network (E-HORN). E-HORN is a regional platform uniting domestic election observer organizations across eight countries within the East and Horn of Africa to strengthen election observation standards, regional coordination, and peer learning. It's not clear where the charges facing Dr. Sarah Bireete are emanating from as she is known to speak openly about electoral issues.

Amnesty International's [research](#) has revealed that ahead of the forthcoming elections on 15 January 2026 Ugandan authorities have launched a brutal campaign of repression against the opposition and its supporters as well as government critics, making it extremely difficult for them to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The crackdown has resulted in over 400 arbitrary arrests since September 2025 of opposition supporters, perceived opposition supporters and other government critics. Some of those arrested have also been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 12 June 2026

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Sarah Bireete (She/Her)