

URGENT ACTION

MILITARY COURT CONVICTS HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

On 7 January 2025 during a court session, soldiers physically prevented Eron Kiiza from entering the military court's section for defendants' lawyers when his clients, opposition politician was arraigned. Eron Kiiza responded by shouting and banging on the courtroom barricade. Soldiers assaulted him while removing him from the courtroom, before arresting and placing him in the dock alongside his clients. The court later on the same day convicted him of "contempt of court" and sentenced him to nine months imprisonment at Kitalya prison without a fair trial. Ugandan authorities must stop trying civilians in military courts, stop targeting lawyers simply for doing their job and immediately release Eron Kiiza.

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

Dear President Museveni,

I am writing to express grave concern about the assault, arbitrary detention, conviction and nine-month sentencing of lawyer **Eron Kiiza** solely for carrying out his professional duties.

On the morning of 7 January, during a hearing for his client, soldiers physically prevented Eron Kiiza from entering the military court's section for defence lawyers. He responded by shouting and banging on the courtroom barricade. Soldiers then punched Eron Kiiza in the face, head, and body while removing him from the courtroom. They then arrested him and placed him in the dock alongside his client. Only a few hours later, and without even reading the charges or hearing arguments, the General Court-Martial (a military court) convicted him of "contempt of court" and sentenced him to nine months imprisonment at Kitalya prison, where he remains held. His lawyers have appealed his conviction. When his lawyers visited him in detention on 20 January, they noticed he had lost a significant amount of weight and had bruises on his arms and legs. Eron Kiiza told his lawyers that prior to being brought to prison he was tortured including thoroughly beaten by military personnel.

Eron Kiiza had publicly opposed military courts trying civilians, stating rightly that the practice is unconstitutional and contravenes courts decisions in Uganda. In July 2021, rulings from the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court held that it is unconstitutional for civilians to be tried in military courts and that the jurisdiction of military courts over criminal cases should be limited to trials of military personnel for breaches of military discipline.

Eron Kiiza's arbitrary detention is yet another example of the Ugandan authorities' targeting of high-profile critics and perceived opponents of the President and members of the first family with measures including enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrests and detention. Amnesty International strongly believes that Eron Kiiza's detention and conviction is based solely for carrying out his professional duties and the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

I urge your government to immediately release Eron Kiiza as he is detained solely for carrying out his professional duties and peacefully exercising his human rights. I further urge you to ensure a prompt, impartial and effective investigation is carried out into the assault on Eron Kiiza and allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and bring to justice those suspected to be responsible in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Eron Kiiza is a Ugandan human rights lawyer and environmentalist. He is the co-founder of the law firm Kiiza & Mugisha Advocates and heads the Environment Shield Limited, a grassroots NGO specializing in climate, natural resources and environmental justice as components of social justice. He was one of the lawyers representing Dr Kizza Besigye, a Ugandan opposition politician and former presidential candidate for the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) political party, who was [abducted in Nairobi, Kenya in early November 2024](#). He resurfaced on 20 November 2024 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 awaits trial, due to begin on 3 February 2025. Amnesty International has [called for Kizza Besigye's immediate release](#) as his abduction clearly violated international human rights law and the process of extradition with its requisite fair trial protections.

With regard to Eron Kiiza's conviction and sentencing, his right to a fair trial was violated since the charges against him were not read to him. He was also denied an opportunity to take plea to any charges/s or respond with a defence. He was further not accorded any right to appoint counsel to represent him.

According to Eron Kiiza's lawyers, Eron Kiiza seemed weak when they last visited him in Kitalya prison on 20 January 2025. He appears to have lost an extensive amount of weight within less than two weeks of his arbitrary detention.

Amnesty International has [reported that Eron Kiiza's continuing detention is a travesty](#) and that the sham trial process directly violates Uganda's constitution.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 July 2025

NAME AND PRONOUN: Eron Kiza (he/him)