

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST ARRESTED FOR CRITICISING THE PRESIDENT

On 13 April, Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, a Ugandan activist, was arrested by military police at his home in Iganga, eastern Uganda. He was charged with the trumped-up charges of defamation and cyber related crimes and detained in the military barracks at Mbuya, near the capital Kampala. He is popularly known as the author of "The Greedy Barbarian", a book that criticizes the ruling first family of Uganda and is also a political activist linked to the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party.

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

President Yoweri Museveni
The President of the Republic of Uganda
Parliament Avenue
Kampala
Uganda
Email: info@statehouse.go.ug

Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern for Kakwenza Rukirabashaija, an activist, author and law student, who was arrested by six military police officers at his home in Inganga on 13 April 2020. He was arrested on trumped-up charges of defamation and cyber related crimes. During his arrest, the police told him that he was being arrested because of the book that he had written. He remains in detention at Uganda People's Defense Force Military Barracks in Mbuya.

I also wish to bring to your attention that Kakwenza Rukirabashaija has not had access to a lawyer while in detention and his family has been unable to visit him due to the ongoing lockdown to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

I fear that the arrest and continued detention of Kakwenza Rukirabashaija is part of a wider pattern of escalating repression, harassment and intimidation of vocal critics of the government and the ruling first family and that he is being detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- ***Ensure the immediate and unconditional release of Kakwenza Rukirabashaija and ensure that all charges against him are dropped;***
- ***Ensure that until he is released, he is allowed unhindered access to his family and lawyers and that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment. If contact visits are restricted due to Covid-19 preventive measures, they must be replaced with other means of contact, for example by phone, emails or video calls.***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Kakwenza Rukirabashaija is a Ugandan author and law student popularly known for his new book, "Greedy Barbarians", that criticizes President Yoweri Museveni and his family. He has also authored an opinion piece titled "Uganda perhaps needs own brand of democracy called 'Musevenocrazy'". In this piece he wrote that President Museveni is the worst president that Uganda has ever had.

He is also a political activist linked to the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party and is lined up to stand for the Member of Parliament seat for Rubabo Constituency in the next general election.

He has also been documenting cases of police killings and brutality during the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown in Uganda.

The Government of Uganda has previously used repressive laws such as the Computer Misuse Act 2011 and practices such as arbitrary arrest and detention to systematically harass, intimidate and stifle its critics. Many restrictions have been placed on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly of political opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders, activists and students because they are perceived as a threat to the government.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 1 June 2020

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Kakwenza Rukirabashaija (he, him, his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: N/A