

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/218/2011
21 April 2011

Uganda urged to halt police attacks on peaceful protesters

The Ugandan government must immediately end the excessive use of force against protesters, Amnesty International said today, after police fired live rounds at crowds of protesters in different parts of the country reportedly killing a child.

Five people have been killed in Uganda since the protests, sparked by a rise in fuel prices and the cost of living, began on 11 April.

“The police have a duty to protect themselves and uphold the law, but it is completely unacceptable to fire live ammunition at peaceful protesters,” said Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International’s Africa Deputy Director.

“They must now investigate these deaths immediately in a thorough, independent and effective manner.”

One child was killed and two protesters injured by bullets during protests in the town of Masaka today, a local journalist told Amnesty International. Two police officers were reportedly badly beaten by protesters during the disturbances.

Kizza Besigye, leader of the opposition party, Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), was today arrested for the third time since the protests began. He has been charged with unlawful assembly and will appear in court on 27 April.

Two men were shot dead by security forces in the northern town of Gulu on 14 April. Adoni Mugisu, a market vendor, and Charles Otula, a mechanic died after police fired into crowds of unarmed protesters. The government expressed regret over the deaths and blamed the deaths on the opposition leaders and protesters.

During the protests in Gulu one other person was reportedly lynched by protesters for wearing a T-shirt with a photograph of President Museveni.

On Monday 18 April, dozens of people were arrested and charged with offences ranging from inciting violence to participating in unlawful assemblies. Among them was Democratic Party leader Norbert Mao, who refused to apply for bail and is scheduled to appear in court next month.

“Uganda must immediately drop all charges against Kizza Besigye and all other opposition politicians, activists and supporters,” said Michelle Kagari.

“Criminal charges must not be used against those taking part in peaceful protests and those detained must be released”

“The government must also launch an independent investigation into all human rights violations alleged to have been committed during the recent events. All those suspected of carrying out acts of unlawful violence must be held to account.

Since the conclusion of the February 2011 general elections, the Ugandan police have maintained a blanket ban against all forms of public assemblies and demonstrations, on grounds of ensuring public security.

“The ban on public rallies violates the right to freedom of expression provided for under Uganda’s Constitution and

international law. It must be lifted immediately, "said Michelle Kagari,.

"The Ugandan government argue that the ban is in the interest of public security. But in fact it is having the opposite effect, causing widespread disruption," she said.