



UGANDA LAW SOCIETY PRESS STATEMENT

RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND PROTECTION FROM INHUMAN TREATMENT.

Uganda Law Society is gravely concerned about the events that occurred along Kampala Mbarara highway on 10th October 2015 involving politicians and their supporters in the opposition and members of the Uganda Police Force. From information that has been gathered and that which was aired on several television stations in Uganda, the Uganda Police Force acted to stop politicians and their supporters from travelling to Rukungiri to carry out political activities. The reason advanced for the actions of the Uganda Police Force was that the intended political activities were illegal as no permission had been granted under the Public Order and Management Act.

The press captured and relayed events which showed officers of the Uganda Police Force actively participating in or encouraging acts which are heinous, inexcusable, grossly indecent and inhuman. The victims included senior opposition actors in the political landscape in Uganda, Members of Parliament, opposition political party leaders and ordinary Ugandans. These people were manhandled, roughed up and bundled onto waiting UPF pick-ups and transferred to various police stations. Another was carted away to a police station on a flat-bed carrier while remaining inside his vehicle.

A lady who was part of the travel party was dragged on the ground in public, had her clothes removed exposing her modesty in a manner that is repugnant to good conscience, respect for human rights and dignity. This conduct, particularly against the lady is a violation of Article 33 of the Constitution which grants full dignity to women particularly in view of their unique status and natural maternal functions in society.

Uganda Law Society treats these events as an unacceptable, unfortunate and a backward assault on Ugandans by those supposed to protect them. This conduct is not in tandem with the dictates of our Constitution or good conscience. It does not portend a future of peace and stability. It is unnecessary, outlandish, undemocratic and an affront on the conscience of Ugandans.

We therefore urge the Government of Uganda to reign in and bring to book those among its regular and other forces involved in unlawful and unconstitutional conduct. We believe that a cowed population cannot give birth to a democratic nation. We believe that equality before the law is an essential element of democratic practice and that human dignity, whether for a man or a woman, must be preserved at all times. If the rights of citizens are disrespected arbitrarily and voices of reason engaged in legitimate political activity are subjected to unending humiliation, the rule of law will be eroded and the social consequences will be disastrous for all.

Being fully cognizant of its mandate to protect and assist members of the public in all matters touching, ancillary or incidental to the rule of law and administration of justice in Uganda; the Uganda Law Society hereby calls upon:-

- a) The Government of Uganda and its armed forces everywhere, at all times, to respect and protect the rights and freedoms of all Ugandans irrespective of their political persuasions.
- b) The Uganda Police Force to immediately investigate this incident and take action against the perpetrators.
- c) The Uganda Police Force to appreciate that their duty to protect and preserve law and order is not a license to abuse and assault Ugandans or deny them enjoyment of their inherent rights and freedoms because these are not granted by the State or by the Uganda Police Force or its individual officers.

- d) The Uganda Police Force to re-examine the conduct of its personnel which shows evidence of serious deficiency in training in the area of human rights and quickly review the training curriculum to emphasize and promote a human rights based approach to policing.
- e) The Uganda Police Force to refrain from use of unnecessary and brutal force, arbitrary arrests or detention; and instead protect, help and reassure Ugandans, and be seen to do all this with integrity, sound judgment and professionalism.
- f) All persons in Uganda, including political actors, to work towards national harmony, peace, reconciliation and true nationalism at all times. It is imperative that each one of us consciously replaces the voices of bubbling armies of violence and simmering tensions with voices of reason and legions of peace, exhibiting tolerance and respect for all, especially those with differing views and positions.

Uganda Law Society will continue to be at the forefront of the protection of rights and freedoms of all as a recipe to guarantee Constitutionalism and the rule of law in Uganda and calls upon all persons of good will to support its efforts.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY



RUTH SEBATINDIRA

PRESIDENT – UGANDA LAW SOCIETY

12th October 2015