



# The Freedom of Expression and Information Situation in Uganda

October 2011 - July 2012

A Civil Society Perspective

As Informed by the HRC Recommendations

With Support From Freedom House

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# INTRODUCTION

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## **ABOUT HRNJ-UGANDA**

Human Rights Network for Journalists- Uganda (HRNJ-Uganda) is a network of human rights journalists in Uganda working towards enhancing the promotion, protection and respect of human rights through defending and building capacities of journalists to effectively exercise their constitutional rights and fundamental freedoms for collective advocacy through the media.

We research, monitor and document attacks and threats aimed at journalists as well as abuses of press freedom in Uganda. We endeavor to offer legal support to journalists who are in need of these services because of the work they do on a day-to-day basis.

HRNJ-Uganda provides medical and psycho-social support to media practitioners injured in the course of duty. It also trains and educates journalists on various thematic issues in order to enhance their competence and capacities on human rights and good governance.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-Uganda) is grateful to all individuals and organizations that have stood with the organization since its inception and have enabled it participate in the first ever human rights review of Uganda by the Human Rights Council under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism. Special thanks to all the organizations (the thematic cluster on freedom of expression and information) and individuals that participated in the initial stages of the UPR process; HRNJ-Uganda staff, Executive Board and our International partners who have supported us to make the process meaningful to all stakeholders.

We would like to thank our development partners for the support extended to HRNJ-Uganda that has enabled it coordinate the FOE-I activities in the UPR process and specifically we recognize the contributions made by FREEDOM HOUSE for the continued support to HRNJ-Uganda and freedom of expression in Uganda.



# PREFACE

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With the support from Freedom House, HRNJ-Uganda has been able to take part in the first ever review of Uganda's human rights record of the last four years by the Human Rights Council. As you may be aware, Uganda's human rights record came under review on the 11th October, 2011 by the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the report of the working group was formally adopted on the 16th March 2012 at the 19th session of the HRC.

In addition to the already accepted recommendations and the voluntary pledges, government of Uganda further accepted 21 of the previously reserved recommendations.

While we applaud the state for the concessions made during the actual review and at the adoption proceedings, HRNJ-Uganda notes with great concern that recommendations on freedom of expression and media rights were never given such attention they deserved by the state. This comes at the backdrop of a continued culture and orchestrated attacks on journalists. This has witnessed an increased and deteriorating human rights situation of journalists in the country.

Since the October 2011 review and the March 2012 adoption of the working group report, freedom of expression and media rights have continued to face attacks and abuse. Specifically the period has witnessed over 30 journalists being attacked and some summoned for questioning by the various state agencies while others are still facing trumped up charges in the various courts of law notwithstanding that the HRC recommended the dropping of all such cases.

This report tries to document the UPR process in Uganda and seeks to ascertain the level of implementation of freedom of expression recommendations three months after the adoption of the working group report.

It lists actions that have so far been undertaken by the various state agencies in meeting their obligation to implement the said recommendations.

Thank you



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Geoffrey Wokulira Ssebaggala  
Programs Coordinator - HRNJ-Uganda



## THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW<sup>1</sup>

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all 193 (with the inclusion of South Sudan to the UN General Assembly) UN Member States once every four years. The UPR is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council which is based on equal treatment for all countries. The UPR aims at the improvement of the human rights situation in every country with significant consequences. It is also designed to supporting, and expanding the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground. To achieve this, the UPR involves assessing States' human rights records and addressing human rights violations wherever they occur. The UPR also aims to provide technical assistance to States and enhance their capacity to deal effectively with human rights challenges and to share best practices in the field of human rights among States and other stakeholders.

During the first years of the review cycle, the UPR has proven to be a useful forum from which States and other stakeholders can share good practices and identify strategic areas where technical assistance and capacity development support may be needed. This is very critical in strengthening capacities of countries to create improvements given that States must return to the Council for subsequent reviews, and report back inter alia on the measures taken to implement the recommendations made during previous reviews.

Within this context, and in order to enable the UPR-mechanism to function efficiently, concerted involvement of the State and other stakeholders is important. While States lead the process of implementation of the said recommendations, CSOs, can considerably contribute to preparation of state periodic reports in order to ensure that they reflect the human rights improvements anticipated in the recommendations to the state and also in following up the outcome of the process through advocacy and holding Government accountable on compliance.

## THE REVIEW OF UGANDA OCTOBER 2011- MARCH 2012

HRNJ-Uganda reporting on access to information, freedom of expression and media rights submitted a report for consideration during the review of Uganda. Also a number of stakeholders from Uganda from different organizations and representing

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted from <http://ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx> accessed on 18 July 2012

## HRNJ-UGANDA

different thematic clusters/ rights took part in the review session.

During the interactive dialogue held on the 11th October 2011, Uganda was represented by the State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hon. Henry Okello Oryem. He delivered the state report and made reactions to questions made during the session.

Following the interactive dialogue, a draft outcome report on the issues reviewed highlighting the states` reactions to the recommendations was made. Of the 171 recommendations, 110 were accepted and 42 reserved while 19 did not enjoy the support of the state.

The working group report was adopted at the 19th session of the HRC held on 16th March 2012. At the adoption, the government of Uganda was represented by H.E Maurice Peter Kagimu Kiwanuka. Speaking as the concerned country, Uganda noted that many of the recommendations had received overwhelming support and had been accepted without reservations save for a few that needed parliamentary approval and had an effect on the various international obligations of the state.

He noted further that Uganda had carried out sectoral consultations on the 42 recommendations that had previously been deferred and informed the HRC that a standing inter-ministerial committee had been established in fulfillment of the voluntary pledges it had made during the review to look at them.

The process of formulating a National Action plan to steer the implementation of the recommendations as per the voluntary commitments and pledges that were made during the interactive dialogue was under way. This process was to be followed by the drawing of a road map to kick start the processes that will be implemented by the said inter-ministerial committee.

While several States and NGOs commended the state for the acceptance of several recommendations and its commitment to making improvements in the human rights field, they called for the urgent address of the several issues of concern affecting HRDs and specifically put in place measures to see that fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly are better respected, promoted and protected.

The State has the primary responsibility to implement the recommendations contained in the final outcome<sup>2</sup>. The UPR ensures that all countries are accountable

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted from <http://ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/BasicFacts.aspx> last accessed on 18 July 2012

for progress or failure in implementing these recommendations. When it comes time for the second review of a State, they must provide information on what they have been doing to implement the recommendations made during the 1st review four years earlier.

The outcomes report that was adopted contains recommendations to be implemented by the government. It will be the governments` responsibility to implement these recommendations. This will be done through an agreed to road map to guide the implementation process of the national action plan.

HRNJ-Uganda has been on the forefront of engaging with the implementation process of the recommendations. A number of interventions have been undertaken by the secretariat to monitor specific state agencies working on media freedoms in the implementation of the recommendations.

HRNJ-Uganda has since the adoption of the process, conducted the following as part of the implementation process<sup>3</sup>;

- HRNJ-Uganda has been in touch with the various state agencies responsible for media rights to influence the implementation of the FOE recommendations.
- HRNJ-Uganda has identified which recommendations it and the thematic cluster of freedom of expression can address and how especially those that were rejected by the SUR;
- HRNJ-Uganda has continued to promote de-briefing and consultations with the thematic cluster on freedom of expression and media rights on the implementation processes;
- HRNJ-Uganda is in the process of drafting and submitting periodic reports back to the HRC on the implementation process;
- HRNJ-Uganda has commenced consultative activities around the regions of Uganda to inform the process and level of implementation of the said recommendations;
- HRNJ-Uganda has held a national symposium for journalists from the print, electronic and broadcast media from across the country to enhance their capacities in understanding and following up on the implementation of the UPR recommendations by the State.
- HRNJ-Uganda has developed and circulated a UPR best practices and lessons manual for FOE-I actors` engagement with the UPR process in Uganda.

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**3 With guidance from the CSOs guide to the UPR- Connectus; Road map for stakeholders participation**

## **HRNJ-UGANDA**

Noting that the capacity of the various government agencies to engage with the various international human rights reporting mechanisms is generally limited; this urgently calls for close monitoring by CSOs and HRNJ-Uganda in particular of the implementation process of the various state obligations arising from its international mandate. Uganda has had a very poor reporting record to the various international human rights treaties; the government has not been able to implement its reporting obligations with respect to a number of conventions<sup>4</sup> to which it currently suffers a huge backlog of reports overdue.

### **UGANDA`S UPR STORY – CSOS / A JOURNALIST`S PERSPECTIVE**

**MR. WOKULIRA SSEBAGGALA.**

#### **Programs Coordinator At HRNJ-Uganda**

HRNJ-Uganda was excited by this new UN initiative. Mr. Wokulira Ssebaggala the Program Coordinator at HRNJ-Uganda observed that, “the UPR has come at a time when human rights in Uganda especially media freedoms have been constantly coming under attack. Specifically actors on FOE-I have witnessed continued harassment from especially state actors through malicious prosecution over trumped up charges and the use of draconian laws to intimidate and close down media houses. Thus the UPR offers an avenue to stakeholders from all the regions in Uganda to unitize and bring to the fore front the plight of journalists and issues affecting the enjoyment of freedoms of expression and information in Uganda. It will outlive undemocratic regimes whenever they truthfully implement all the recommendations.”<sup>5</sup>

**MR. SSEMPALA ROBERT**

#### **Advocacy Officer HRNJ-Uganda**

Mr. Ssempala saw the UPR as a mechanism that will manage to steer the observance of fundamental rights and freedoms. That through the submission of periodic reports on the status of implementation/ observance of the HRC recommendations, the government will continuously commit to the respect of rights of journalists in

<sup>4</sup> Uganda has a backlog of 6 reports on the ESCR has never submitted a progressive report since it ratified the convention in 1987, 3 reports on the ICCPR

<sup>5</sup> HRNJ-Uganda (2012); The Universal Periodic Review Of The Human Rights Council Foe- Foi Actors` Engagements With The Upr Process In Uganda. Best practices and lessons; a stakeholders` perspective

Uganda and reporting timely on the status of improvement under its international obligations. The UPR has become a worthwhile mechanism that will surely bring redress to human rights victims in a timely manner as and when those violations are brought to light through the periodic reports submitted by HRNJ-Uganda.

**HRC RECOMMENDATIONS ON FOE-I AND VOLUNTARY PLEDGES AND COMMITMENTS MADE BY UGANDA DURING THE REVIEW**

<b>Clusters</b>	<b>Accepted</b>	<b>Reserved</b>	<b>Cross cutting</b>	<b>Voluntary Pledges</b>
<p>FOE-I cluster</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amend laws that are contrary to the state`s international obligation to respect, protect &amp; promote FOE</li> <li>Investigate &amp; hold accountable police and security officers who attacked journalists during the 2011 post election period</li> <li>End intimidation, threats &amp; physical attacks on journalists &amp; promote open reporting &amp; commentary on issues of public concern</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend &amp; issue and open standing invitation to all special procedures of the human rights council</li> <li>Arrange for the visit of the special rapporteur on the promotion &amp; protection of the right to freedom of opinion &amp; expression as soon as possible</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ease the heavy administrative burdens on NGOs, such as the yearly registration obligations</li> <li>Simplify the NGO registration requirements &amp; remove the NGO Board from the supervision of security organizations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop &amp; implement a national action plan on human rights issues</li> <li>Carry out annual review of the human rights situation in the country &amp; report as appropriate</li> <li>Establish a Cabinet Sub-Committee to provide policy oversight &amp; guidance on HR issues</li> <li>Mainstream HR issues in all aspects of governance</li> <li>Establish an inter-ministerial technical committee to provide technical back up to the Cabinet Sub committee</li> <li>Establish a HR desk under the MoJ&amp;CA to coordinate HR issues at the national level. The mandate of the desk will be defined in consultation with the UHRC</li> </ol>

<b>Clusters</b>	<b>Accepted</b>	<b>Reserved</b>	<b>Cross cutting</b>	<b>Voluntary Pledges</b>
<p>FOE-I cluster</p>	<p>4. Train security forces to respect FOE and freedom of assembly as well as, ensure strong accountability for any attacks against journalists and human rights defenders</p> <p>5. Take positive steps to put in place public order legislation which respects the rights of assembly</p>	<p>3. Consider positively the request for visit by the special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly &amp; association</p>	<p>3. Investigate &amp; prosecute all persons found guilty of extrajudicial killings &amp; attacks on HRDs</p>	<p>7. Establish a focal point in MoFA to provide coordination of stakeholders with the international community</p> <p>8. Designate focal points in each of the stakeholders to follow up &amp; report on the implementation of HR issues</p> <p>9. Inculcate HR, voter education &amp; civic education in the education curriculum of schools</p> <p>10. Mainstream HR issues in the training curriculum of security agencies.</p>

## **WHERE HAS UGANDA DONE WELL, TO ENHANCE THE PROTECTION OF FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**

Uganda has been able to pass the major laws that ensure protection of human rights and ratified eight of the nine international conventions/ treaties.

Particularly the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda is the supreme law and provides a Bill of rights under chapter 4. The constitution created the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), as the national human rights institution charged with the promotion and protection of human rights.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the promotion and advisory mandate, the UHRC has quasi-judicial powers to investigate and judiciously rule on human rights violations.

The biggest challenge facing the Commission, however, is the failure by the State to adequately fund the commission and implement orders and awards of the court. That notwithstanding, the few achievements are faced with erosion as the state holds onto a grip of the legislature passing draconian laws that affect or threaten the basic human rights like the proposed Public Order Management Bill, The NGO Act, The Press and Journalist Act and the proposed Amendment Bill (2010), The Reg. Interception of communications Act, The Computer Misuse Act, The Anti Terrorism Act, the Police Act (which of late has been the tool being used by the police to prohibit freedom of assembly) and a host of others including disrespect to judicial decisions and continued harassment and intimidation of journalists.

## **WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR DONE TO REALIZE THESE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The UPR, according to Mr. Javier Sanjuan of the UN office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, is a state driven process, which provides the opportunity for each state to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries, to fulfill their human rights obligations and to express the challenges that they are facing to fulfill these obligations. In summary, it provides a platform for accountability on accomplishment of the obligations dictated by the several human rights instruments, and an opportunity for CSOs to raise their major concerns about the situation of the human rights in the country<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See Article 51 – 58 of the Constitution of Uganda

<sup>7</sup> OHCHR (2012); Paper presented at the National Symposium for journalists on UPR organized by HRNJ-Uganda on 8-June- 2012 at Sojvallo Hotel, Kampala.

As we undertake this process, we remind ourselves of the opportunities that await us to see an improved human rights situation through the implementation of the recommendations of the Human Rights Council under an all inclusive developed national action plan.

According to the Multilateral Organizations and Treaties Department<sup>8</sup>, actions to fulfill the voluntary pledges started immediately while careful and serious consideration of the 110 recommendations that Uganda accepted also kicked off with:

1. Nomination of focal points by different MDAs on request by MOFA;
2. Preparation of a cabinet paper on the UPR process;
3. Clustering of the UPR recommendations into thematic areas for submission to the respective stakeholders for necessary action. This is part of the effort to popularize the UPR recommendations and create public awareness;

Noting that the UPR process is a continuing process, there is a need to develop and submit periodic reports to the HRC will facilitate in determining the extent of realization of human rights in Uganda.

## **THE FOE-I SITUATION IN UGANDA SINCE THE ADOPTION OF THE WORKING GROUP REPORT**

Uganda has over the years moved from a period of instabilities to a relatively peaceful era being experienced today. The human rights situation on the other hand can be described as comprising of the 'the good; the bad; and the ugly'. Whereas the early years of the NRM regime saw a progressive improvement in the human rights situation with the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, recent developments witnessed in 2011 in particular leave a lot to be desired. The post election period has ushered into the country a feeling of uncertainty characterized by increased infringement and violation of human rights through draconian laws that have greatly curtailed the enjoyment of human rights and the work/space for the human rights defenders/ journalists getting to an ever shrinking and sinking edge.

The Uganda Constitution guarantees freedom of expression which shall include freedom of the media. However in the first half of this year -2012, trends show that the threats to these fundamental freedoms are glaring as journalists continue to be harassed and attacked by the very people who are supposed to protect them.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012); Paper presented at the National Symposium for journalists on UPR organized by HRNJ-Uganda on 8-June- 2012 at Sojovalo Hotel, Kampala.

## **HRNJ-UGANDA**

The attacks on journalists were spread countrywide according to cases reported to and documented by HRNJ-Uganda with the country's Capital -Kampala district recording 23 cases, Wakiso eleven, Kayunga seven, Mukono and Entebbe four respectively. Other districts that recorded incidences of attacks included Lugazi, Ntungamo, Lira, Pader, Teso, Kasese and Kaliisizo

Journalists working for the State media agencies under the Vision Group of Companies) are becoming more targets of attacks by Police. They registered the highest number of threats and attacks in the first half of the year with over 50% of the cases. International correspondents were not spared too.

The year 2011, witnessed a continuation of an orchestrated pattern of serious and systematic human rights violations targeting human rights defenders and in particular journalists deemed critical of the state. All this was in total contravention of Uganda's obligations under international human rights instruments and the country's Constitution. Human rights defenders and journalists have continued to be targeted for harassment, threats, unjustified criminal charges and violence to mention but a few. Equally, fundamental rights and freedoms pertaining to individual Ugandans have not been spared either. Rights and freedoms have continuously come under scrutiny by state actors who are the primary duty bearers and mandated to respect, protect and promote the enjoyment of human rights.

Two months after the review by the UN Human Rights Council freedom of expression and information activists witnessed seven attacks on journalists despite government's commitment to adhere to International Human Rights obligations. Despite government's voluntary commitment to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators, there has been no particular action taken resulting into an increment in the attacks.

The attacks varied from physical attack on journalists which contributed the highest number of violations with 25 cases reported and documented. Other forms took the shape of arbitrary arrests and detention, denying journalists access to news scenes, confiscation and or, damage of gadgets maliciously -both video and photo cameras, erasing of journalists' materials on the gadgets, detective and trumped up charges, to verbal threats among others.

With the adoption of the report of the working group on the review of Uganda in March 2012, it had been expected that the horrific plight of journalists and the

general situation of FOE-I would improve, but to the contrary. In the first half of the year, HRNJ-Uganda has documented over 60 cases of direct attacks on practicing journalists all over the country as compared to 107 cases documented in the whole of 2011<sup>9</sup>.

Top on the list of perpetrators of freedom of expression and media rights is the Uganda Police Force. The police are implicated in over 50% of the cases so far reported. The Uganda Police is followed by State House operatives; faith based organizations and unfortunately the judiciary which is supposed to be the custodian of justice.

The situation has been made worse by the growing levels of impunity especially due to the weak protection and accountability mechanisms to punish perpetrators, for example; none of the implicated police officers has been reprimanded or faced disciplinary action in spite of the fact that these cases were drawn to the attention of the superior authorities. It should also be noted that no investigations have been carried out to desired conclusion.

Sadly, the police force has resorted to disguised compensation of its victims as a way of addressing journalists complaints. A case in point is the WBS television journalist who was "compensated" 6.3 million shilling in July this year for equipment that was vandalized by policemen while covering events in Kampala. The manner in which the compensation is done and the criteria followed is unclear and very suspicious.

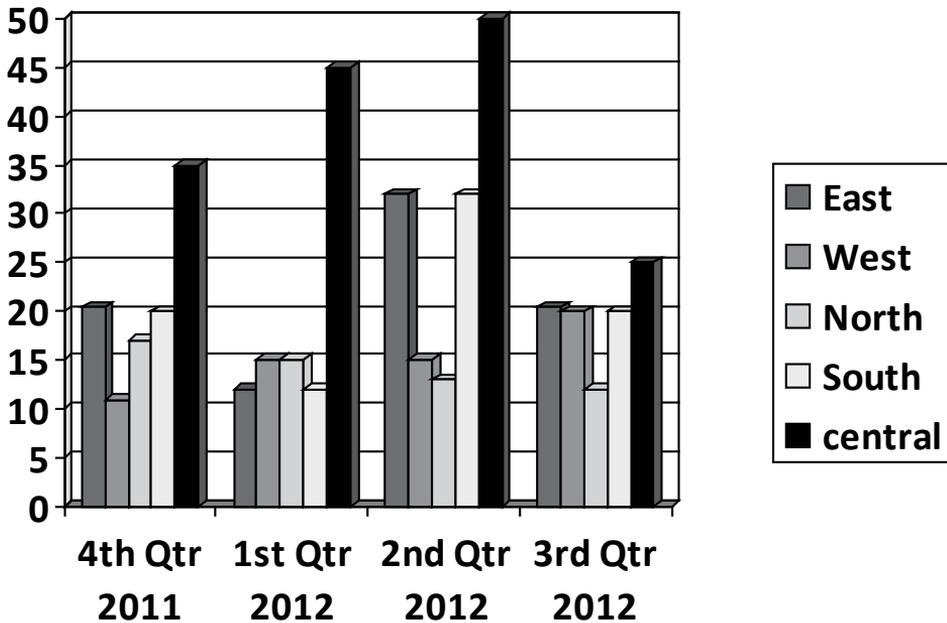
All this happened in spite of the fact that the government had committed during the adoption of the UPR report to respect, protect and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms

Whereas it's expected that the government would be currently implementing it's voluntary pledges and commitments it made during the UPR review and implementing the recommendations in time for the first periodic reporting process covering one year after the review, HRNJ-Uganda is dismayed at the extent of continued and unabated abuses and attacks on journalists like never before.

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9 HRNJ-Uganda (2012); Situation of journalists and media freedoms six (months) after Uganda's review by United Nations Human Rights Council

**Figure showing percentages of threats and attacks aimed at FOE-I actors per region**



*HRNJ-Uganda is concerned that there has been unprecedented increase of threats and attacks on journalists especially in the central region registering over 50% of the threats.*

**HRNJ-UGANDA INTERVENTIONS SO FAR**

Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-Uganda), through its legal and advocacy programs has provided support to all the victims of abuse who expressed interest in the same. It has provided legal counsel and representation to all journalists who were facing criminal prosecutions arising from their reporting.

HRNJ-Uganda notes with concern that whereas all these cases were brought to the attention of the authorities concerned including the police, most of them were never investigated, while others partially investigated.

Equally worth noting are the various capacity building and advocacy engagements that HRNJ-Uganda has undertaken over the past ten months in protection and promotion of FOE-I in Uganda. A number of regional capacity building initiatives on personal and organizational safety and security for journalists and actors on FOE-I

were undertaken to capacitate journalists on their safety and security.

HRNJ-Uganda has developed and circulated a UPR best practices and lessons manual for FOE-I actors' engagement with the UPR process in Uganda -the report was the first of its kind under this mechanism.

A number of radio and TV talk shows were held over the last six months highlighting the situation of journalists in Uganda. These were in tandem with the need to popularize the UPR process and mechanism especially highlighting the recommendations on FOE-I to which the government had committed to implement.

Whilst the various interventions, a number of challenges worth mentioning have characterized HRNJ-Uganda's efforts of securing justice to not only its members but also all actors/ journalists facing attacks.

The challenges have taken the form of increasing and unabated/ continued attacks on FOE-I and journalists. This has been coupled with victimization and improper compensation measures. A number of victims have received compensation from perpetrators in circumstances that do not depict transparency. This is being used as a tool to silence the victims or get them withdraw the complaints which HRNJ-Uganda has been working on thus affecting our interventions and mandate.

There is a general lack of commitment from the various media houses to support their staff when in danger. Many media houses have abandoned their staff when in trouble with authorities and in some cases they have forced them into making out of court settlements. As a result, the victims never return to court and in some cases abandon the proceedings. HRNJ-Uganda believes that this method has promoted the culture of impunity and has often discouraged it because it believes that no person should be treated in any manner that is inhuman and every victim has a right to justice. In addition, it leaves the journalists more exposed as rights violators and abusers remain occupying offices and carrying on with normal duties without any form of accountability.

HRNJ-Uganda has provided medical and psycho-social support to media practitioners injured in the course of duty.

This coupled with the lack of commitment by the journalists to make timely reports of the attacks and make continued follow up, has frustrated HRNJ-Uganda's work making it hard for HRNJ-Uganda to pursue the perpetrators.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

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- HRNJ-Uganda believes that the process of developing the national action plan should be more transparent and fast tracked so as to have the continued human rights violations brought to an end; and to necessitate meaningful periodic reporting;
- We call on the government of Uganda to put in place measures that will necessitate the visit by the UN special rapporteur on freedom of expression in Uganda as recommended by the HRC during the review of Uganda;
- HRNJ-Uganda denounces all actions by the various state agencies that undermine freedom of expression and information particularly those actions that aim at stifling media freedoms, intimidating journalists, and threatening them with criminal prosecutions;
- HRNJ-Uganda calls on the police Professional Standards Unit (PSU) to reign over the errant officers who have entrenched a culture of impunity and continuously orchestrated attacks against journalists;
- HRNJ-Uganda calls on all HRDs and victim journalists to prioritize the achievement and exercise of full media freedoms and FOE-I without wishing to settle for petty hand outs from violators of fundamental rights and freedoms;
- HRNJ-Uganda calls on all media houses to put in place measures that will ensure the safety and security of their employees/ journalists while on duty. Such measures should include among others provision of legal advice and representation whenever criminal charges arising from the course of employment have been instituted by the state machinery.
- HRNJ-Uganda working with the thematic cluster on freedoms of expression and information, should simplify the UPR recommendations especially on FOE-I and also translate the same in different local languages so as to enable a wide section of the society to appreciate them and play an important role in the implementation process.
- HRNJ-Uganda calls on the respective media houses to stand in solidarity with their employees who have fallen victims of attacks at the hands of the state and non-state actors to make sure that they get timely justice.
- The State should drop all charges against media practitioners as recommended by the HRC
- Government should ensure and guarantee the independence and integrity of all state media and give equal access to all Ugandans while protecting the individual journalists working in these institutions.

# CONCLUSION

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The UPR mechanism seeks to improve the human rights situation on the ground in every country. Re echoing the words of Ban Ki Moon the UN Secretary General, 'the Universal Periodic Review mechanism has the potential of reaching the darkest corners of the world'. The UPR should be taken as a mechanism that attempts an institutional approach to address the culture of impunity among state actors by making timely interventions through succinct recommendations which if implemented will address the existing gaps. It, too, aims at building the capacity of governments to meet their international obligation. The UPR gives stakeholders` like HRNJ-Uganda an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation in the country through submission of stakeholders` and periodic reports that provide the HRC with an independent third voice of what is happening on the ground.

HRNJ-Uganda commits to engage with the new UN mechanism to ensure that freedoms of expression and information are better respected, protected and promoted on the ground in Uganda.

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