



HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK FOR JOURNALISTS - UGANDA

In Defence & Promotion of Freedom of Expression, Information & Media Freedom

14th/August/2018

For Immediate Release

Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-Uganda) condemns the unabated attack on journalists covering the political campaigns for the Arua Municipality Parliamentary by-elections.

On 13th Aug, 2018, NTV journalists Herbert Zziwa and Ronald Muwanga were arrested while on duty and detained at Arua police, their gadgets were confiscated. They were driven miles away to Gulu the next day and charged with inciting violence and malicious damage to property before being released on bond.

On the same day, in the evening, NBS TV journalists Bakabaage Julius was assaulted by a security agent who hit him with a baton on the head as he reported the campaigns. His workmate John Kibalizi and Benson Ongom had to run away as the security men chased after them until they hid in unknown place.

The following day, as they arranged their unit and set for relaying the events of the day, they were attacked by five men in both army and civilian clothes who wanted to arrest them, the trio had to run away leaving their gadgets behind, which got confiscated by the security men.

Daily Monitor's Yasin was also assaulted and his still camera confiscated by the security agents

HRNJ-Uganda is concerned with the growing acts of targeting journalists on the line of duty by state agencies all of which infringe on freedom of expression and press freedom in Uganda.

It is disturbing that such actions which limit press freedom and rights of journalists mainly during political campaigns have been on the rise since the end of 2017 and have persisted in 2018. The media operating environment is increasingly getting unduly restricted by both the State and non-state agents.

The attacks and threats which range from assault, denial of access to news scenes, damage of gadgets, unlawful arrest and detention are compounded by actions of abductions and incommunicado detention.

The State must at all times respect, promote and uphold the fundamental right freedom of expression and press freedom, while police, army and other security agencies should act impartially and ensure the safety and security of journalists on the line of duty. To this end, HRNJ-Uganda is to petition the police and army leadership over the deteriorating operating media environment at the hands of their respective officers. We also need to see an end to trumped up charges brought against journalists as a way of intimidating and silencing them.

We also urges members of the media fraternity to be professional in their work, vigilant and work together in ensuring their safety and security. The managers and editors should work hand in hand with their reporter and media development organization to advocate for a conducive and safe media environment.

For God and My Country



ROBERT SEMPALA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR