PRESS STATEMENT: For Immediate release

**The State in Uganda must stop blatant attacks against Journalists and human rights defenders**

Human rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-Uganda) is exceptionally concerned by the escalation of attacks against Journalists and other human rights defenders who have taken up the mantel to fight for media freedoms in Uganda. It has come to our attention that one of our prominent female members Ms Lynn Najjemba –a media trainer with Panos Eastern Africa formerly a producer at Radio One FM90 –a private radio station, was last night attacked by assailants we believe are part of a new unit formed by Government operatives to beat up journalists and other human rights defenders who are determined to push for media freedoms and democracy in the country.

Ms Najjemba was attacked by a group of men using sticks similar to those used by the dreadful Kiboko squad –a controversial security group that has been previously seen working alongside the police to beat up demonstrators and opposition politicians on the streets of Kampala. In this unfortunate attack, Ms. Najjemba sustained back injuries, she now complains of severe headache which is by every measure a result of the said attack.

We urge the Uganda Police Force to investigate these attacks conclusively and ensure that the perpetrators are arraigned in courts of law to act as a deterrent to any other state operative wishing or planning to attack Journalists and other human rights defenders since freedom of the media and association are provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and other internally instruments to which Uganda is a party.

Ms. Najjemba was very contributory in efforts that resulted into the journalists meet with the minister of Internal Affairs Gen. Aronda Nyakairima on the 15th September, 2015, in the wake of the rampant attacks against journalists by State functionaries, especially the police. At this meeting, the journalists accused the police chief, Gen. Kale Kayihura of not taking action against errant policemen implicated in the attack of journalists in the line of duty, in addition to labeling the media as opposition. We believe that this attack is linked to a recent meeting we held.
Particularly, Ms Najjemba was among those that stood firm to urge the minister to call the police force to order so as to stop brutal attack on journalists and suppression of media freedoms. During that meeting, she mentioned state operatives that have been beating up journalists and we believe that those people could have had some informants in the meeting who identified Ms Najjemba and planned this cowardly attack.

It should also be recalled that when, a senior police office, ASP Joram Mwesigye – the DPC of Old Kampala Police assaulted our colleague, Andrew Lwanga of WBS TV, Ms. Najjemba was among the journalists and human rights activists who strongly demanded for action to be taken against the officer.

In other series of attack, we have also received reports that 3 Journalists were attacked in Gulu reportedly on orders of the Resident District Commissioner after they investigated and brought to light a said corruption scheme which characterized the construction of a local market. These attacks are part of a wider scheme to harass and intimidate critical and independent journalists and media houses in Uganda.

Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-Uganda) calls on the State uphold media freedoms as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda by investigating perpetrators of violence and abuses against journalists to book, but also issue directives to its agencies to stop treating Journalists and other human rights defenders as enemies. We also urge journalists to take keen interest in their safety and security while on duty.

Together for media freedom
For God and My Country

ROBERT SSEMPALA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR