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Freedom on the Net 2025 - Uganda

Partly Free

52

/ 100

A [Obstacles to Access](#) 15 / 25

B [Limits on Content](#) 21 / 35

C [Violations of User Rights](#) 16 / 40

Last Year's Score & Status

53 / 100 Partly Free

Scores are based on a scale of 0 (least free) to 100 (most free). [See the methodology](#) and [report acknowledgements](#).

Key Developments, June 1, 2024 – May 31, 2025

Internet freedom in Uganda declined slightly during the coverage period. The government continued to restrict the space for free expression online by cracking down on social media users, including through the imposition of multiyear prison sentences. Online intimidation and harassment against LGBT+ users persisted.

- The government continued to exert control over online news media. In June 2024, journalists Dickson Mubiru and Alirabaki Sengooba, both from the digital outlet theGrapeVine, were charged with operating without a broadcasting license. The charges were linked to two reports—one on a disagreement between a lawyer and a High Court judge and the other on alleged corruption among legislators (B6 and C3).¹
- Internet users faced arrests and prison sentences for their online activities during the coverage period. In July 2024, a court sentenced Edward Awebwa to six years in prison for insulting President Yoweri Museveni and his family on the short-video platform TikTok.² Another TikToker, Emmanuel Nabugodi, was sentenced to two years and eight months in prison in November 2024 for the alleged offenses of hate speech and spreading malicious information. He had posted a video that depicted a mock trial of Museveni (C3).³
- Persecution of LGBT+ internet users persisted during the coverage period. A May 2025 report from Access Now documented at least 17 people who had been arbitrarily detained or criminally charged under Uganda's harsh anti-LGBT+ laws between May 2023 and March 2025 after being entrapped or otherwise deceived online (C3).⁴
- In an October 2024 report, Amnesty International noted at least four cases in which LGBT+ people or organizations had their social media accounts hacked. In one case, the hacker posted doctored images that could incriminate the victim. The same report found that LGBT+ people and those suspected of being LGBT+ have also faced doxing and online harassment, including death threats (C7 and C8).⁵

Political Overview

While Uganda continues to hold regular elections, their credibility has deteriorated. The country has been ruled by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and President Yoweri Museveni since 1986. The NRM retains power through patronage, intimidation, and politicized prosecutions of opposition leaders. Uganda's civil society and media sectors face legal and extralegal harassment and state violence.

This report has been abridged for Freedom on the Net 2025 due to [ongoing budget constraints](#). Please consider making a [donation](#) to support future editions of this vital resource.

For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

A Obstacles to Access

A1 0-6 pts

Do infrastructural limitations restrict access to the internet or the speed and quality of internet connections? 2 / 6

A2 0-3 pts

Is access to the internet prohibitively expensive or beyond the reach of certain segments of the population for geographical, social, or other reasons? 1 / 3

A3 0-6 pts

Does the government exercise technical or legal control over internet infrastructure for the purposes of restricting connectivity? 6 / 6

Score Change: The score improved from 5 to 6 because, while the social media platform Facebook remains blocked on some mobile networks, it is routinely accessed through other service providers.

A4 0-6 pts

Are there legal, regulatory, or economic obstacles that restrict the diversity of service providers? 5 / 6

A5 0-4 pts

Do national regulatory bodies that oversee service providers and digital technology fail to operate in a free, fair, and independent manner? 1 / 4

B Limits on Content

B1 0-6 pts

Does the state block or filter, or compel service providers to block or filter, internet content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? 5 / 6

B2 0-4 pts

Do state or nonstate actors employ legal, administrative, or other means to force publishers, content hosts, or digital platforms to delete content, particularly material that is protected by international human rights standards? 2 / 4

B3 0-4 pts

Do restrictions on the internet and digital content lack transparency, proportionality to the stated aims, or an independent appeals process? 2 / 4

B4 0-4 pts

Do online journalists, commentators, and ordinary users practice self-censorship? 2 / 4

B5 0-4 pts

Are online sources of information controlled or manipulated by the government or other powerful actors to advance a particular political interest? 2 / 4

B6 0-3 pts

Are there economic or regulatory constraints that negatively affect users' ability to publish content online? 1 / 3

B7 0-4 pts

Does the online information landscape lack diversity and reliability? 3 / 4

B8 0-6 pts

Do conditions impede users' ability to mobilize, form communities, and campaign, particularly on political and social issues? 4 / 6

C Violations of User Rights

C1 0-6 pts

Do the constitution or other laws fail to protect rights such as freedom of expression, access to information, and press freedom, including on the internet, and are they enforced by a judiciary that lacks independence? 2 / 6

C2 0-4 pts

Are there laws that assign criminal penalties or civil liability for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards? 1 / 4

C3 0-6 pts

Are individuals penalized for online activities, particularly those that are protected under international human rights standards? 2 / 6

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because at least two internet users received multiyear prison sentences during the coverage period.

C4 0-4 pts

Does the government place restrictions on anonymous communication or encryption? 2 / 4

C5 0-6 pts

Does state surveillance of internet activities infringe on users' right to privacy? 2 / 6

C6 0-6 pts

Does monitoring and collection of user data by service providers and other technology companies infringe on users' right to privacy? 3 / 6

C7 0-5 pts

Are individuals subject to extralegal intimidation or physical violence by state authorities or any other actor in relation to their online activities? 3 / 5

C8 0-3 pts

Are websites, governmental and private entities, service providers, or individual users subject to widespread hacking and other forms of cyberattack? 1 / 3

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because several LGBT+ individuals and organizations have reportedly had their social media accounts hacked.

Footnotes

- 1Committee to Protect Journalists, "Authorities Detain 2 Ugandan Journalists on Charges of Publishing Without License," June 27, 2024, <https://cpj.org/2024/06/authorities-detain-2-ugandan-journalists-on-cha...>
- 2Basillioh Rukanga, "Ugandan TikTokker Jailed for Insulting President," BBC, July 11, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cv2g6378125o>.
- 3Swaibu Ibrahim, "TikToker Jailed for 32 Months for Insulting Uganda's President," November 18, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd7njyywn5o>.
- 4Access Now, "How Uganda's Anti-LGBTQ+ Laws Entrap People Online," May 15, 2025, <https://www.accessnow.org/uganda-anti-lgbtq-entrapment-laws/>.
- 5Amnesty International, "'Everybody Here is Having Two Lives or Phones': The Devastating Impact of Criminalization on Digital Spaces for LGBTQ People in Uganda," October 23, 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/8571/2024/en/>.

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