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UGANDA 2019 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Uganda is a constitutional republic led since 1986 by President Yoweri Museveni of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party. In 2016 voters re-elected Museveni to a fifth five-year term and returned an NRM majority to the unicameral parliament. Allegations of disenfranchisement and voter intimidation, harassment of the opposition, closure of social media websites, and lack of transparency and independence in the Electoral Commission (EC), marred the elections that also fell short of international standards. The periods before, during, and after the elections were marked by a closing of political space, intimidation of journalists, and widespread use of torture by the security agencies.

The national police maintain internal security. While the army is responsible for external security, the president detailed army officials to leadership roles within the police. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

Significant human rights issues included: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; forced disappearance; torture; and arbitrary detention by government agencies. The government was also responsible for harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; detainment of political prisoners; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; lack of independence of the judiciary; the worst forms of restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests or prosecutions of journalists, censorship, and site blocking; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; restrictions on political participation; significant acts of corruption; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or intersex persons (LGBTI); and the existence of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults.

The government was reluctant to investigate, prosecute, or punish officials who committed human rights abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere in government, and impunity was a problem.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were several reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including due to torture.

On August 5, opposition Member of Parliament (MP) and presidential hopeful Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, announced that his supporter, fellow musician Michael Kalinda also known as Ziggy Wyne, died at Mulago Hospital due to injuries sustained from severe torture. Kyagulanyi said that Kalinda went missing on July 21 after receiving multiple messages warning him “to be careful.” Unidentified individuals dropped Kalinda’s body at the hospital with an eye plucked out, two fingers cut off, and with burns on his torso. According to the Uganda Police Force (UPF), a hospital postmortem concluded that Kalinda succumbed to brain injuries caused by “blunt force trauma to the head.” The postmortem report added, “Kalinda’s right hand had cuts on two fingers, classified as defense injuries arising out of a struggle.” On August 5, the UPF concluded “the injuries point to a straightforward case of murder.” On August 6, however, the UPF reversed its initial finding and said that further investigations had revealed that Kalinda sustained his injuries in a motorcycle accident and closed all investigations into murder. Kyagulanyi refuted the UPF account and said he would continue to assert that the state murdered Kalinda unless the UPF presented evidence to show Kalinda died in an accident. At year’s end the UPF had not presented any closed-circuit video evidence (see section 1.f.) of the incident.

On March 24, UPF officers attached to the Field Force Unit subunit charged with protection of high-profile individuals at the Naggalama Police Post arrested and later shot and killed 40-year-old motorcycle taxi driver Ronald Ssebulime. The UPF suspected that Ssebulime planned to harm Minister of State for Information and Communications Technology Ida Nantaba. The minister had earlier called the UPF for help after noticing a motorcycle she thought was trailing her. A UPF patrol chased Ssebulime, arrested him, placed him in handcuffs, and asked him to make a will before they shot him. Ssebulime’s family alleged that he had been on his way to visit his daughter in boarding school. The UPF initially reported the incident as an attempt on the minister’s life but later said it was investigating three of its officers for the killing. In September the prosecution dropped the murder charges against the three officers and the minister but charged another police officer with murder. No trial date had been set by year’s end.

The authorities did not report any new findings related to the 2018 killing of Kyagulanyi's driver, Yasin Kawuma.

b. Disappearance

Local media reported several disappearances, particularly of individuals identified as supporters of Kyagulanyi. On August 5, local media reported that accountant and supporter of Kyagulanyi's People Power movement John Bosco Kibalama had been missing since June 3 after the UPF found Kibalama's car abandoned on the roadside outside Kampala, with his effects intact inside. The UPF said it initiated investigations into the disappearance but reported no findings by year's end. Kibalama remained missing.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit such practices. The law stipulates that any person convicted of an act of torture may receive a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment, a fine of 7.2 million shillings (\$1,920), or both. The penalty for conviction of aggravated torture is life imprisonment. Nevertheless, there were credible reports security forces tortured and physically abused suspects.

In June the government's human rights agency, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), said in its annual report that allegations of security agencies' use of torture was the most common complaint it registered. It reported that lengthy pretrial detention and detention beyond the legally mandated duration often led to the torture of suspects as security agencies sought to coerce a confession or incriminating statements from the detained persons. Local civil society organizations and the UHRC reported that the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI), the domestic intelligence agency Internal Security Organization (ISO), and the UPF were most notorious for torture. In a separate report, the Human Rights and Peace Center at the Makerere University School of Law noted that security forces used over 70 different types of torture techniques, both physical and psychological, including electric shocks, exposure to hot furnaces smoldering with red pepper, submersion in water, and beatings on the limbs and joints, among other torture methods. On June 30, local media reported that on June 23 unidentified individuals had dumped Makerere University student and Kyagulanyi supporter Joshua William Mukisa at a fuel station in Jinja outside Kampala, with scars on his limbs incurred from torture while in detention. Local media reported that unidentified individuals kidnapped Mukisa at the university on

May 17, blindfolded him, and drove him to an undisclosed unofficial detention facility. According to the media, unidentified security officers tied him upside down, beat him with sticks and batons on the legs and hands, and demanded that he renounce his affiliation with Kyagulanyi. The UPF said it was investigating the circumstances surrounding Mukisa's kidnapping but released no details from the investigation by year's end.

Local civil society activists, media, and opposition politicians reported that the CMI and ISO operated unofficial detention facilities called "safe houses" in the Mbuya, Nakasero, and Kololo neighborhoods of Kampala, Kyengera in central Uganda, and the Kalangala Islands in Lake Victoria near Entebbe. They allegedly held suspects without trial and exposed them to torture and inhumane treatment. Responding to media reports that ISO detained a lawyer in its Kyengera "safe house," the Speaker of Parliament on August 15 instructed parliament's Committee on Human Rights to investigate the government's operations in "safe house." Numerous former detainees told the committee on September 4 that ISO held them in "safe houses" where ISO officers beat them, denied them bedding, fed them only once a day, and denied them access to their families and lawyers. One former detainee said ISO operatives used chains to hang him by the arms for several days, damaging tissue in his abdomen. Another former detainee said ISO officials plucked out his toenails with a pair of pliers and tied heavy weights on his genitals. Former detainees and relatives of detainees in "safe houses" said some detainees spent upwards of six months in detention without arraignment in court, and without contact with the outside world. The former detainees also said ISO worked with an alleged burglar and killer called Soobi to inflict harm on detainees in "safe houses," while pressuring them to confess to crimes. When asked to respond to allegations of detentions in "safe houses," Minister for Security Elly Tumwine told the committee on August 28 that it was standard international practice for intelligence agencies to operate "safe houses" and that the country was no exception. Tumwine said "safe houses" help the government "to manage hard-core criminals, who require a long time to reform, especially those who have rescinded to criminality after serving long prison sentences and now need observation and surveillance." He confirmed that the government worked with Soobi, who was "fundamental in helping security agencies trace the violent criminals he used to operate with, who have not reformed." Tumwine denied the allegation that ISO officers torture detainees, but within the same hearing, said ISO suspended some officers for "illegal" activities. He refused to grant the committee permission to visit the "safe houses." On September 10, committee members travelled to one of the "safe house" locations, but armed officers denied them entry. The committee hearings continued at year's end.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Conditions in detention centers remained harsh and in some cases life-threatening. Serious problems included overcrowding, physical abuse of detainees by security staff and fellow inmates, inadequate food, and understaffing. Local human rights groups received numerous reports of torture committed by security forces and prison personnel. Reports of forced labor continued. Most prisons did not have accommodations for persons with disabilities. The government operated unofficial detention facilities where it detained suspects for months without charge.

Physical Conditions: Gross overcrowding remained a problem. The UHRC maintained “some prisons housed twice or up to three times their designated capacities,” especially prisons holding male detainees. The Uganda Prison Service (UPS) reported that its prison population was nearly three times its capacity. Local civil society organizations Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) and the UHRC reported that delays in the judicial process also caused overcrowding in police cells. The UHRC reported that overcrowding had increased the spread of communicable diseases, especially multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis. In January during her court hearing, dissident and academic Stella Nyanzi said that she suffered a miscarriage while in detention in Luzira Prison and that authorities had denied her access to her medical records and to private medical care. She also told the court in August that female detainees suffered urinary tract infections because of using pit latrines emptied only infrequently. In September, Nyanzi reported that prison guards inflicted harsh physical abuse on her while she was in solitary confinement (see section 2.a).

The FHRI reported that the criminalization of vagrancy had contributed significantly to overcrowding in police cells. It reported that the UPF carried out sweeping exercises, arresting many unemployed youths at the same time on charges of vagrancy. Local media reported in March that the UPF arrested more than 1,350 unemployed youths in a single round up, and detained 300 of them in one police cell, leaving three to die of suffocation. The UPF disputed the report and insisted that only one suspect died after collapsing during the arrest. On October 1, the UPF reported that, in response to a presidential directive, it would cease arresting and prosecuting citizens under the vagrancy law and would begin releasing all suspects previously arrested under this law. It was unclear how the release of suspects would be carried out. Police, however, continued to make sweeping arrests of “suspected criminals.” Opposition politicians said the government used videoconference court sessions to deny political prisoners an

opportunity to appear in public court. The state held bail hearings for Kyagulanyi on May 2 and sentencing sessions for Nyanzi on August 3 via videoconference. According to the UHRC, authorities continued to violate the law by holding juveniles and adult detainees together in police stations and prisons it visited, due to an absence of specialized holding cells for children, UPF personnel's ignorance of the law, and failure to ascertain the juveniles' ages.

The UHRC reported that there were reports of food shortages for prisoners held in police cells, and "most detainees had at most one meal a day provided by authorities." It reported that most detainees relied on family members to bring them food.

Administration: Authorities did not always carry out investigations into credible allegations of mistreatment. Local media reported on June 28 that the UPS did not investigate allegations that one of its staffers tortured to death inmate Stephen Ochieng at Masafu government prison. Local civil society organizations, media, and politicians reported that ISO and CMI detained numerous suspects at unofficial detention facilities, where they denied them access to visitors.

Independent Monitoring: The UPS allowed the local civil society organizations African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims to conduct prison visits with advance notification; however, no independent monitors received access to any unofficial detention facilities or pretrial detention cells. The International Committee of the Red Cross declined to comment on whether it conducted prison visits during the year.

Improvements: The UPS reported that it constructed new prison facilities in the country that added space for an extra 4,000 prisoners. The new facilities included a modern health facility, recreational facilities such as sports fields, and a school. The judiciary also reported that plea bargaining sessions had significantly reduced the number of inmates on pretrial detention.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Although the law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, security forces often arbitrarily arrested and detained persons, especially opposition leaders, politicians, activists, demonstrators, and journalists. The law provides for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court, but this mechanism was seldom employed and rarely successful.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires that judges or prosecutors issue a warrant before authorities make an arrest, unless the arrest occurs during commission of a crime or while in pursuit of a perpetrator. Nevertheless, authorities often arrested suspects without warrants. The law requires authorities to arraign suspects within 48 hours of arrest, but they frequently held suspects longer without charge. Authorities must try suspects arrested for capital offenses within 360 days (120 days if charged with an offense triable by subordinate courts) or release them on bail; however, if prosecutors present the case to the court before the expiration of this period, there is no limit on further pretrial detention. While the law requires authorities to inform detainees immediately of the reasons for detention, at times they did not do so. The law provides for bail at the judge's discretion, but many suspects were unaware of the law or lacked the financial means to cover the bond. Judges generally granted requests for bail. The law provides detainees the right to legal representation and access to a lawyer, but authorities did not always respect this right. The law requires the government to provide an attorney for indigent defendants charged with capital offenses, but there are significant delays in the process. Security forces often held opposition political members and other suspects incommunicado and under house arrest.

Arbitrary Arrest: Arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention, particularly of dissidents, remained problems. The UPF and the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) on numerous occasions arrested and harassed opposition politicians, their supporters, and private citizens who engaged in peaceful protests and held public rallies. On October 22, the military police and the UPF arrested 20 female Makerere University students who were protesting planned tuition fee increases. The police released the students on October 23 and the university administration then suspended them indefinitely. According to local media, on the evening of October 23, unidentified individuals kidnapped one of the student protestors, Siperia "Mollie" Ssasiraabo, detained her at an unknown facility, beat her, and dropped her off at a Kampala hospital the next morning. Between October 23 and October 30, the student protests at Makerere continued and local media showed videos of military police officers beating journalists and students with sticks, ransacking university residence halls, firing teargas into the university library, residence halls, and classrooms, as well as sounds of explosions in residence halls. On October 29, President Museveni directed the military police to vacate the university campus and to leave law enforcement operations to the UPF. On October 30, unidentified individuals kidnapped university student leader and Kyagulanyi supporter Julius Kateregga, beat him, tranquilized him, and left him at

the university gate early the next morning after warning him that they would kill him if he protested again. Kateregga said that on the same day unidentified men had kidnapped another female student protest leader, raped her, and dumped her at the university gate.

Pretrial Detention: Case backlogs due to an inefficient judiciary that lacks adequate funding and staff, inadequate police investigations, the absence of plea-bargaining prior to 2015, insufficient use of bail, and the absence of a time limit for the detention of detainees awaiting trial contributed to frequent prolonged pretrial detentions. The UPS reported 48 percent of the country's nearly 60,000 inmates were pretrial detainees. The UHRC reported that the UPF was mostly responsible for lengthy pretrial detention because it held many suspects beyond the 48-hour limit without arraigning them in court. The UHRC also said that it encountered numerous suspects whom the UPF held for longer than eight months without arraignment.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: Citizens detained without charge have the right to sue the Attorney General's Office for compensation for unlawful detention; however, citizens rarely exercised this right.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, but the government did not always respect this provision. Corruption, understaffing, inefficiency, and executive-branch interference with judicial rulings often undermined the courts' independence. The FHRI reported that in the Gulu judicial district alone, it would take the High Court 10 years to resolve a backlog of 800 cases at the current rate of 80 per year. The executive, especially security agencies, did not always respect court orders. On September 11, Local media aired images of CMI officers in plain clothes storming court premises and arresting a lawyer and four suspects in the 2017 murder of senior police official Andrew Felix Kaweesi, after the court granted them bail. The officers drove in unmarked vehicles, blocked the entrance to the International Crimes Division of the High Court, pulled the suspects out of their vehicles into a waiting van and drove off. The Deputy Chief Justice, Alphonse Owiny-Dollo, released a statement the same day and noted with concern "persistent cases of interference in the administration of justice by security agencies" and "wanton disregard of the independence of the judiciary." Owiny-Dollo called upon the security agencies to investigate and bring the officers responsible to account. On September 12, the UPDF released a statement noting that a team of officers from various security agencies rearrested the suspects on

allegations that they were “peace violators.” The UPF released a statement on September 13 asserting that it had the authority to enter any premise and effect arrests, including courtrooms.

The president appoints Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, High Court judges, and members of the Judicial Service Commission (which makes recommendations on appointments to the judiciary) with the approval of parliament.

Due to vacancies on the Supreme Court, Constitutional Court, High Court, and the lower courts, the judiciary did not deliver justice in a timely manner. At times the lack of judicial quorum precluded cases from proceeding.

Judicial corruption was a problem, and local media reported numerous cases where judicial officers in lower courts solicited and accepted bribes from the parties involved. On May 21, local media reported the UPF had arrested a public attorney for allegedly soliciting a six-million-shilling (\$1,600) bribe to influence a court case.

Trial Procedures

Although the law provides for a presumption of innocence, authorities did not always respect this right. Defendants have the right to prompt, detailed notification of the charges against them and are entitled to free assistance of an interpreter. An inadequate system of judicial administration resulted in a serious backlog of cases, undermining suspects’ right to a timely trial. Defendants have the right to be present at their trial and to consult with an attorney of their choice. The law requires the government to provide an attorney for indigent defendants charged with capital offenses. Defendants have the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense and appeal. The law allows defendants to confront or question witnesses testifying against them and present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf, but authorities did not always respect this right. On August 22, the government appealed the judicial decision dismissing “offensive communication” charges against Nyanzi because the aggrieved party--the president--did not appear to testify against her. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt, and they have the right to appeal.

All nonmilitary trials are public. A single judge decides cases in the High Court, while a panel of at least five judges decides cases in the Constitutional and Supreme Courts. The law allows military courts to try civilians who assist

members of the military in committing offenses or are found possessing arms, ammunition, or other equipment reserved for the armed forces.

In September 2018 the International Crimes Division (ICD) of the High Court began the trial of Thomas Kwoyelo, a former commander in the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Kwoyelo remained in detention since the UPDF captured him in 2008. Kwoyelo faced 93 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity; his was the first war crimes trial in the country's history. Civil society and cultural leaders from LRA-affected areas criticized the slow pace of the trial and stated that the ICD did not adequately consider cultural practices of mediation and forgiveness in trying Kwoyelo.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Authorities detained numerous opposition politicians and activists on politically motivated grounds. Authorities released many without charge but charged others with crimes including treason, annoying the president, cyber-harassment, inciting violence, holding illegal meetings, and abuse of office. No reliable statistics on the total number of political detainees or prisoners were available.

On April 29, the UPF arrested Kyagulanyi on charges of holding an illegal assembly in relation to a 2018 protest he held in Kampala against a proposed tax. The court remanded Kyagulanyi later that day until May 2, when it released him on bail upon condition that he not participate in "unlawful assemblies." The trial continued at year's end.

On August 2, a court sentenced dissident Stella Nyanzi to 18 months in prison for cyber-harassment of the president (see sections 1.c. and 2.a). On August 15, Nyanzi and the state filed counterappeals, and on September 25, the court attempted to hear the proceedings in the judge's chambers, in an effort to prevent public viewing of the procedures. Nyanzi's attorney's objection to the private hearing led the judge to defer the matter to the court's administrative head, who issued no ruling by year's end.

The state on August 6 amended the charge sheet in Kyagulanyi and his fellow politicians' 2018 treason trial to add five new charges, including annoying the president, inciting violence, and disobeying lawful orders. The trial continued at year's end. Three years after the 2016 raid on the Rwenzururu kingdom, the High Court still had not set a trial date for the Rwenzururu king, Charles Wesley Mumbere, and his bodyguards whom the state arrested and charged with murder,

terrorism, and treason after a raid on the king's palace in Kasese. At year's end the state continued to hold the bodyguards on remand at Luzira prison and to limit the king's movements to the Kampala, Wakiso, and Jinja districts. The court did grant the king permission to seek healthcare abroad but denied his request to travel to the Kasese area. On July 24, local media reported two bodyguards died in detention at Kirinya and Luzira prisons.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies for human rights violations through the regular court system or the UHRC, which has judicial powers under the constitution. A law passed in March, the Human Rights Enforcement Act, allows a court to halt any judicial proceedings and grant bail to the accused while questions pertaining to human rights violations remain outstanding. The law also empowers the courts to grant restitution, rehabilitation, or compensation to victims of human rights abuses as well as to hold public officials involved in human rights violations personally liable, including contributing to compensation or restitution costs. Finally, it gives courts powers to order the release of persons whose rights the authorities violated while in detention. The UHRC's powers include the authority to order the release of detainees, pay compensation to victims, and pursue other legal and administrative remedies, such as mediation. Victims may appeal their cases to the Court of Appeal, and thereafter to the Supreme Court. Civil courts and the UHRC have no ability to hold perpetrators of human rights abuses criminally liable, and bureaucratic delays hampered enforcement of judgments that granted financial compensation. The government rarely complied with judicial decisions related to human rights. On June 18, the UHRC chairperson said the Ministry of Finance repeatedly refused to pay out compensation and restitution to victims of torture. The Ministry of Finance replied that it was not aware of any compensation claims.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, but there were reports the government failed to respect these prohibitions. Police did not always obtain search warrants to enter private homes and offices. On August 15, media reported the government hired Huawei technicians to hack into Kyagulanyi's private WhatsApp communications to gather political intelligence against him. The Ugandan and Chinese governments both denied spying on Kyagulanyi. The UPF, however, noted in an August 16 statement that Huawei had supplied it with closed-

circuit television cameras with facial recognition technology, which it installed across the country. According to media reports, the government used Huawei surveillance technology to monitor the whereabouts of Kyagulanyi and other political opponents.

The law authorizes government security agencies to tap private conversations to combat terrorism-related offenses. The government invoked the law to monitor telephone and internet communications.

The government continued to encourage university students and government officials, including members of the judiciary, to attend NRM political education and military science courses known as *chaka mchaka*.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech, including for the press, but the government often restricted this right.

Freedom of Expression: The government restricted citizens' ability to criticize its actions. It also restricted some political symbols, musical lyrics, and theatrical performances.

On September 18, the government published guidelines that banned the public from wearing red berets, saying that the berets would henceforth be considered a military uniform and therefore the exclusive property of the state. Red berets had been the symbol worn by supporters of Kyagulanyi's People Power movement. On October 1, Kyagulanyi reported that the UPF and UPDF had started arresting People Power supporters whom they found wearing the red berets. The UPF on numerous occasions also confiscated People Power movement insignia, especially red berets and T-shirts with pro-Kyagulanyi messages. On August 13, the UPF raided the Democratic Party's (DP) offices, arrested four supporters, and confiscated 300 T-shirts with pro-Kyagulanyi messages commemorating the one-year anniversary of Kyagulanyi's arrest and torture. The UPF said the T-shirts bore messages inciting violence. The UPF released the four DP supporters later that day and said it only called them in for interrogation.

Press and Media, Including Online Media: The country had an active media environment with numerous privately owned newspapers and television and radio

stations. These media outlets regularly covered stories and often provided commentary critical of the government and officials. The UPF's Media and Political Crimes Unit, however, closely monitored all radio, television, and print media, and security forces subjected numerous journalists to harassment, intimidation, and arrest. Government officials and ruling party members owned many of the private rural radio stations and imposed reporting restrictions. Media practitioners said government and security agents occasionally called editors and instructed them not to publish stories that negatively portrayed the government. On April 30, the communications regulator Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) wrote to broadcast houses ordering the suspension of 39 journalists holding producer and editing positions for violating minimum broadcast standards when they aired live images of a Kyagulanyi procession through Kampala on April 29. The UCC also ordered the media houses to submit all footage aired that day for investigation. On May 8, the Uganda Journalists Association and two private attorneys filed an application in court to block the UCC action, which a court granted May 23, indicating that the UCC had overstepped its mandate.

Violence and Harassment: Security forces subjected journalists and media houses to violence, harassment, and intimidation. On February 7, the UPF arrested five local and international journalists who were working undercover to report on the theft of drugs in public hospitals. The UPF stated that it arrested the five on charges of "illegal possession of classified drugs." On February 8, the UPF released the journalists on police bond but said investigations into the case continued. Civil society contacts also reported that in October the president expelled a journalist from a press conference after the reporter asked a question about the country's fiscal debt.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: The government penalized those who published items counter to its guidelines, and directly and indirectly censored the media, including by controlling licensing and advertising, instructing editors to suspend critical journalists, arresting and beating journalists, and disrupting and ransacking photojournalistic exhibitions. The media, under government pressure, practiced self-censorship. On July 24, NBS TV aired live footage as Kyagulanyi launched his presidential bid in his home but edited out parts of his speech that were critical of the regime and of the president. In early August the UCC announced that it required online publishers, bloggers, and influencers to register with them for a \$20 annual license. The UPF on several occasions switched off and broke into FM radio station studios that hosted opposition politician Kizza Besigye for talk shows. On April 18, the UPF switched off the Mubende FM radio

transmission, and then forced its way into the studios where Besigye was attending a talk show and arrested him.

Libel/Slander Laws: Authorities used libel and slander laws to suppress criticism of government officials. On June 14, local media reported that on June 12 the authorities arrested journalist Pidson Kareire for offensive communication and criminal libel in relation to stories he published about labor recruitment companies with ties to the president's family.

National Security: Authorities cited laws protecting national security to restrict criticism of government policies. Security agencies arrested numerous dissidents on charges of incitement of violence. UPF and UPDF officials on June 15 arrested events manager and Kyagulanyi supporter Andrew Mukasa as he held a press conference to announce a marathon in Kyagulanyi's honor, on charges of inciting violence and disturbing the president's peace. The UPF arraigned him in court on June 19 and released him on bail July 11. The case continued at year's end.

Internet Freedom

The government restricted and disrupted access to the internet, censored online content, monitored internet communications without appropriate legal authority, and punished internet users who expressed divergent political views. On July 12, the UPF arrested pastor and former journalist Joseph Kabuleta on the accusation that he wrote "grossly offensive" posts on Facebook that referred to the president as "a gambler, thief, and liar." The UPF said it would use "its acquired abilities to monitor comments on social media," and punish offenders. Kabuleta told local media July 16 that UPF officers beat him until he bled in the face and took photos of his bruised face, before demanding that he promise never to insult the president's son. Police released Kabuleta on July 16 without charge.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

The government restricted some artistic presentations. The government throughout the year blocked Kyagulanyi from holding concerts at various locations across the country, allegedly because his previous concerts fell short of security guidelines, easily "turned into a public nuisance, violated traffic rules and regulations and caused other misconducts." The government in June blocked concert performances by musician Joseph Mayanja, also known as Jose Chameleone, after he announced that he had joined the opposition DP. The government in November

published new regulations on the performing arts that required all artists to seek government clearance before recording any material or staging performances.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The government restricted freedoms of peaceful assembly and association.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

While the constitution provides for freedom of assembly, the government did not respect this right. The government continued to use the Public Order Management Act to limit the right to assemble and disrupted opposition and civil society-led public meetings and rallies. The law placed a significant bureaucratic burden on those wishing to organize or host gatherings and afforded the UPF wide discretion to prevent an event. While the law only requires individuals to “notify” police of their intention to hold a public meeting, it also gives the police the power to block meetings they deem “unsuitable.” Typically, the UPF simply fails to respond to “notifications” from opposition groups, thereby creating a legal justification for disrupting almost any gathering. On May 30, the UPF fired teargas and bullets into the air to disperse opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party officials and supporters as they held a public rally at their offices in Iganga town. The UPF said the rally was an illegal assembly, since the police had not approved it.

Freedom of Association

While the constitution and law provide for freedom of association, the government did not respect this right. The government restricted the operations of local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), especially those that work on civil and political rights (see section 5). Government regulations require NGOs to disclose sources of funding and personal information about their employees and impose onerous registration and reporting requirements. They enable the NGO Bureau and its local level structures to deny registration to any organization focused on issues deemed “undesirable” or “prejudicial” to the “dignity of the people of Uganda.” The regulations also provide the NGO Bureau broad powers to inspect NGO offices and records and to suspend their activities without due process. They increased registration fees for local NGOs from 20,000 shillings (\$5.33) to 100,000 (\$26.67), and annual permit renewal fees from 20,000 shillings (\$5.33) to 60,000 shillings (\$16), respectively. They also introduced new fees, including for the

NGO Bureau to review permit applications (60,000 shillings, or \$16) and for NGOs to file annual reports (50,000 shillings, or \$13.33). On August 8, the Ministry of Internal Affairs started a one-month validation and verification exercise that required all unregistered NGOs to register and all registered NGOs to validate and verify their registration and operation details with the NGO Bureau (see Section 5). The Ministry of Internal Affairs said the exercise would weed out thousands of NGOs that operated illegally. Civil society activists worried that this exercise would assist the authorities to limit their operations, especially the operations of NGOs engaged in civil and political rights. The same day, the government's anti-money-laundering agency, the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA), sent a letter to local banks asking for financial information and three years of bank statements from 13 accountability and good governance focused NGOs (see section 5).

The government also restricted the operations of opposition political parties (see section 3).

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement

The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

e. Internally Displaced Persons

Not applicable.

f. Protection of Refugees

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, or other persons of concern. The government continued to uphold its enabling asylum policies and practices towards refugees and asylum seekers from various

countries, mainly from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Somalia. Most refugees enjoyed unhindered access to asylum, freedom of movement, freedom of residence, right to registration and documentation, and access to justice, education, health care, and employment.

UNHCR and NGOs received reports that some government officials demanded bribes from refugees to process or issue paperwork, especially at Old Kampala Police Station, where urban refugees and other migrants registered.

Refoulement: Although there were no credible reports of refoulement during the year, Rwandan and Burundian refugee groups continued to express fear that authorities were either complicit in or unable to stop extrajudicial actions by neighboring governments. South Sudanese human rights defenders resident in the country also feared forcible return because of threats from government officials.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Individuals fleeing South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (as long as Congolese are from eastern DRC) who enter the country through a designated border point have automatic “prima facie” refugee status (status without determination of individual refugee status). The local Refugee Eligibility Committee, however, determines whether individuals fleeing from Rwanda, Somalia, and Burundi and other countries are eligible for refugee status. The committee was functional, but administrative issues and the continued influx of asylum seekers from Somalia, Eritrea, and Burundi created a backlog of more than 26,000 asylum seeker cases as of June.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The country does not have a policy of presumptive denials of asylum to applicants. Numerous sources, however, reported that for several years the country clandestinely received migrants expelled from Israel. According to official reports, the government was unaware of Israeli government plans--later challenged and halted in Israeli courts--to remove approximately 39,000 migrants to unnamed African countries. Sources reported many Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Sudanese migrants crossed through the country. Some of these migrants eventually made their way to Libya and attempted to cross to Europe. There are no credible reports of official acquiescence or complicity in such crossings. There were no further reports received during the year.

Durable Solutions: The government did not accept third-country refugees for resettlement, but it assisted in the safe and voluntary return of refugees to their

homes and supported the resettlement of third-country refugees to other countries by providing birth certificates and travel documents. A 2015 constitutional court ruling confirmed that certain long-term refugees have the right to naturalize, and in 2016, the government committed to begin processing naturalization cases for an estimated 15,000 refugees who had resided in the country for approximately 20 years. During the year there were no known cases of a refugee having naturalized.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The law provides citizens the ability to choose their government through free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage. The law also allows authorities to carry out elections for the lowest-level local government officials by having voters line up behind their preferred candidate or the candidate's representative, portrait, or symbol. Serious irregularities marred the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections and several special parliament elections since.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: In 2016 the country held its fifth presidential and legislative elections since President Museveni came to power in 1986. The Electoral Commission (EC) announced the president was re-elected with 61 percent of the vote, and FDC candidate Besigye finished second with 36 percent. The ruling NRM party captured approximately 70 percent of the seats in the 431-member unicameral parliament. Domestic and international election observers stated that the elections fell short of international standards for credible democratic elections. The Commonwealth Observer Mission's report noted flawed processes, and the EU's report noted an atmosphere of intimidation and police use of excessive force against opposition supporters, media workers, and the public. Domestic and international election observers noted biased media coverage and the EC's lack of transparency and independence. Media reported voter bribery, multiple voting, ballot box stuffing, and the alteration of precinct and district results. Due to election disputes stemming from the elections, in August 2016 the Supreme Court recommended changes to electoral laws to increase fairness, including campaign finance reform and equal access for all candidates to state-owned media. The Supreme Court instructed the attorney general to report in two years (2018) on the government's implementation of the reforms. On July 25, the attorney-general tabled in parliament the government's first effort to comply with the court order.

During the year the EC held several local elections, which civil society organizations and local media reported featured incidents of intimidation of election observers by security forces, arrest of dissidents, and voter fraud. On February 21, the EC lifted the 2018 suspension of the accreditation of the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) after the two institutions agreed on “mutually binding commitments.” The CCEDU is the main civil society election watchdog organization in the country.

Political Parties and Political Participation: Security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained opposition leaders and intimidated and beat their supporters. The law prohibits candidates from holding official campaign events more than four months prior to an election, although the ruling NRM party operated without restriction, regularly holding rallies and conducting political activities. Authorities restricted civil society organizations from observing electoral processes. On July 9, local civil society organization Alliance for Finance Monitoring reported that the UPF had arrested five of its observers on the eve of an election after a ruling party supporter accused them of bias because one wore a T-shirt with the words “we are tired of corrupt leaders.” The UPF released the five without charge on July 10. According to local media and the Assistant Inspector General of Police who is in charge of political affairs, Asan Kasingye, members of Local Defense Units (LDUs) confiscated and destroyed national identity cards belonging to youth. Since national identity cards are required to qualify as a voter, opposition politicians complained that the government was intentionally disenfranchising urban youth who are likely to support the opposition. The UPF said it would investigate and punish all LDU personnel it caught destroying the cards but did not report details of any such actions by year’s end.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit the participation of women or members of minorities in the political process, although cultural factors, high costs, and sexual harassment limited women’s ability to run for political office. Female activists reported that the official fees required to secure a nomination to run for elected office were prohibitively high and prevented most women from running for election. They also reported that male politicians sexually harassed female politicians or those who aspired to enter political office. On June 10, a group of female personal assistants to MPs accused their bosses of sexual harassment and petitioned the speaker of parliament for redress. They reported that male MPs regularly pressured them into exchanging sex in return for keeping their jobs. The speaker instituted a committee to investigate the allegations, but the committee did not report its findings by year’s end.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties of up to 12 years' imprisonment and confiscation of the convicted persons' property for official corruption. Nevertheless, transparency civil society organizations stated the government did not implement the law effectively, officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices with impunity, and, many corruption cases remained pending for years.

Corruption: Media reported numerous cases of government corruption, including a July 7 investigation that revealed members of the judiciary, police, and prisons, some caught on camera, soliciting bribes from the public to secure noncash bail. According to media reports, officials--including judges and state attorneys--collaborated to keep individuals detained until their families paid a bribe. The Kampala City High Court was one of the major epicenters of these activities. In response to this and other allegations of corruption, the chief justice established a taskforce to investigate malpractice in the judiciary; it was due to report findings in late October but did not do so by year's end. On February 18, the Parliament Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities, and State Enterprises (COSASE) published its findings from the 2018 inquiry into "irregular conduct" by the central bank in the process of taking over defunct banks and noted that the central bank acted irregularly in the process. It recommended that central bank officials responsible should account for their actions. Local media reported that MPs across political lines faulted the COSASE for not naming individuals responsible or recommending any arrests. On February 19, the Inspector General of Government (IGG) asked ISO to investigate allegations that members of the COSASE had received bribes from officials in the central bank. In March media reported that the speaker of parliament rejected this request and wrote that it was an attempt to attack parliamentary investigations and "blackmail" and "intimidate" parliamentarians. By year's end there were no criminal proceedings or resignations resulting from the COSASE report.

On June 9, domestic media reported that the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF), a governance program in the country established by European nations, was withdrawing support from four domestic NGOs due to allegations of significant corruption. The report also stated that the DGF had identified widespread corruption among its own staff members, whom they later reprimanded.

Financial Disclosure: The law requires public officials to disclose their income, assets, and liabilities, and those of their spouses, children, and dependents, within three months of assuming office, and every two years thereafter. The requirement

applies to 42 position classifications, totaling approximately 25,000 officials, including ministers, MPs, political party leaders, judicial officers, permanent secretaries, and government department heads, among others. Public officials who leave office six or more months after their most recent financial declaration are required to refile. The IGG is responsible for monitoring compliance with the declaration requirements, and penalties include a warning, demotion, and dismissal.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups operated with government restrictions. The government restricted and failed to cooperate with most domestic and international NGOs, especially those focused on governance and human rights (see section 2.b.). The president repeatedly accused civil society of accepting funding from foreign donors interested in destabilizing the country.

On February 13, 19 NGOs received hand-delivered letters from the UPF asking for information about their services, details of their staff members, sources of funding, and immigration status of foreign workers. Under current law the government requires all NGOs to provide this information to the government-run NGO Bureau when they register. On February 23, the NGO Forum, an organization that represents NGOs in the country, wrote a letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs objecting to this new directive. At year's end the ministry had not responded to the letter, and the 19 NGOs had not submitted the requested information. On August 7, the Ministry of Internal Affairs started a month-long national exercise to reverify all NGOs in the country. According to the ministry, there were more than 10,000 NGOs with expired permits in the country. On September 7, the NGO Forum wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs asking for an extension of the reverification deadline, noting that many rural NGOs had limited internet access and found it difficult to complete the requirements in such a limited time but the Ministry of Internal Affairs refused to extend the deadline. On November 16, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that it had shut 12,000 NGOs that missed the reverification exercise, requiring them to restart the lengthy registration process if they wished to continue to operate. The ministry said that only the 2,200 NGOs that completed the reverification exercise would be permitted to operate.

On August 8, the government's anti-money-laundering agency, the FIA, sent a letter to banks asking for financial information and three years of bank statements for 13 NGOs. All the NGOs targeted were governance, anticorruption, or

environmental activism NGOs and were vocal critics of government activities. Among the NGOs was the DGF, the largest pool of donor funding for governance-related activities in the country. Civil society leaders and opposition politicians claimed that the request amounted to “blackmail” and was an attempt to stall the organizations’ activities, an allegation that the government denied.

The government was often hostile to concerns of local and international human rights organizations, and government officials dismissed NGO claims of human rights abuses by security forces. On June 28, media reported that 149 civil society organizations under the umbrella body, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda, had petitioned the government to release reports on and prosecute culprits of 35 unsolved break-ins in their offices since 2014. Civil society leaders also noted that, in addition to electronic equipment and cash, thieves sometimes stole documents that had no financial values. In the second break-in during the year, on August 12, Rainbow Mirrors, a civil society organization advocating for the rights of transgender sex workers, reported on social media that unidentified persons broke into their offices. The organization filed a complaint with the police, which did not report details of investigations by year’s end.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The UHRC is the constitutionally mandated institution with quasi-judicial powers authorized to investigate allegations of human rights abuses, direct the release of detainees, and award compensation to abuse victims. The president appoints its board, consisting of a chairperson and five commissioners.

The UHRC pursues suspected human rights abusers, including in the military and police forces. It visits and inspects places of detention and holds private conferences with detainees on their conditions in custody. It investigates reports of human rights abuses, reports to parliament its annual findings, and recommends measures to improve the executive’s respect of human rights. The UHRC reported that the executive did not always implement its recommendations. On August 16, the UHRC Chair stated that security agencies had not yet paid more than 8.2 billion shillings (\$2.2 million) that the UHRC had awarded to victims of torture since 2001. According to local media, the chair said the delay occurred because the Ministry of Finance had not released 5 billion shillings (\$1.3 million) to the attorney general for compensation fees and had not responded to letters from the president requesting the release of these funds. According to the UHRC 2018 annual report, a 2016 policy change that made each institution, rather than the attorney-general, responsible for compensating victims had caused delays, since

the various institutions, particularly the UPF and the UPDF, had not budgeted for these large awards. On March 30, President Museveni signed the Human Rights (Enforcement) Act 2019, which changes the existing policy and makes individual perpetrators responsible for compensating victims. By year's end courts had not yet convicted any individual or institution under this law. Some human rights activists and complainants said the UHRC lacked the courage to stand up to the executive in politically sensitive cases. According to local media, opposition politicians said the UHRC limited its actions pertaining to human rights violations to public statements and reports.

The Committee on Human Rights is the legislative team mandated to monitor and report on human rights concerns in all parliamentary business, monitor government's compliance with national and international human rights instruments, study UHRC recommendations, and hold the executive accountable for the respect of human rights. On August 15, the committee opened an investigation into allegations that ISO kidnapped and tortured detainees at safe houses. Local media reported that, following reports from witnesses that security agents followed and intimidated them, the speaker of parliament asked the government to respect the rule of law and cooperate with the Committee. On September 4, Minister of Security Tumwine confirmed there were "several safe houses," but said he would not permit the committee to visit them. On September 6, families of individuals detained in safe houses told the committee about difficulties obtaining information about or seeing their relatives, including a number who held for over two years. The following day ISO released to the police 60 detainees from custody in safe houses. On September 10, media reported that ISO barred members of the committee from accessing potential safe houses at four locations. Powers of the committee were limited to producing a report with recommendations, and tabling it to parliament, which would decide how to move forward.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape of women, which is punishable by life imprisonment or death. The law does not address spousal rape. The penal code defines rape as "unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or a girl without her consent." Men accused of raping men are tried under a section of the penal code that prohibits "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of

nature.” The law also criminalizes domestic violence and provides up to two-years’ imprisonment for conviction.

Rape remained a common problem throughout the country, and the government did not effectively enforce the law. Local media reported numerous incidents of rape, often involving kidnap and killings of women, but the authorities were often unable to investigate and hold perpetrators accountable. Local media often reported that perpetrators of rape included persons in authority, such as religious leaders, local government officials, UPF and UPDF officers, teachers, and university staff. According to local media and local civil society organizations, rape victims often felt powerless to report their abusers, in part to avoid stigmatization. Civil society organizations and local media reported that, even when women reported cases of rape to the police, UPF officers blamed the women for causing the rape by dressing indecently, took bribes from the alleged perpetrators to stop the investigation and to pressure the victims into withdrawing the cases, or simply dismissed the accusations and refused to record them. According to civil society organizations, UPF personnel lacked the required skills for collection, preservation, and management of forensic evidence in sexual violence cases. On February 18, local media reported that a male UPF officer attached to Kirinya Police Station raped a female suspect. According to local media, the officer on the night of February 9 pulled the suspect out of the cell and into the open yard used to store impounded vehicles, where he threatened her with death if she resisted and then raped her. Afterward he ordered her back to the cell. Local media reported that, after the UPF released the victim on police bond, she attempted for three days to report the rape to the same police station, but the officers at Kirinya Police Station refused to record the case. The victim then reported the matter to Kira Police Station, where the officers recorded the matter and had the errant officer arrested. The UPF said it was conducting investigations in order to charge its officer with rape in court but did not do so by year’s end.

Gender-based violence was also common according to local media and civil society organizations. On August 12, local media reported that a UPDF officer beat an 18-year-old pregnant woman after she declined his sexual advances. The UPDF said it had arrested the officer as it carried out its investigations but did not reveal any findings by year’s end. The local civil society organizations Action Aid, MIFUMI, and the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention operated shelters in regions across the country where victims of gender-based violence could receive counseling and legal advice.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C and establishes a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment for convicted perpetrators, or life imprisonment if the victim dies. According to the 2016 Demographics and Health Survey (DHS), the latest DHS, 0.3 percent of the female population under age 50 have undergone FGM/C. On January 21, local media reported that large "gangs" of at least 100 persons, armed with machetes and sticks, marched through Kween district, forcibly dragged girls out of their houses, and subjected them to FGM/C. Local media reported that the gangs beat up UPF officers who attempted to intervene. Deputy Minister for Gender, Labor, and Social Development Peace Mutuuzo said persons who aspired to political office in the 2021 local elections in Kween, Kapchorwa, and Bukwo regions, where FGM/C was prevalent, were funding FGM/C as a strategy for winning hearts and minds. The UPF said it had arrested 16 men and three women it suspected of involvement in forceful FGM/C. The speaker of parliament noted that the government allocated 200 million shillings (\$53,333) annually to fight FGM/C, and Mutuuzo said her ministry used this money to sensitize communities against the practice.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: According to local media and NGOs, ritual child killings, violence against widows, and acid attacks were prevalent. Local media reported that traditional healers (witch doctors) kidnapped and killed children to use their organs for ancestral worship. Local NGOs reported cases in which wealthy entrepreneurs and politicians paid traditional healers to sacrifice children to ensure their continued wealth and then bribed police officers to stop the investigations. On August 23, local media reported that the UPF had started a manhunt for a man who attempted to kill his daughter as sacrifice in ancestral worship. Emmanuel Bwana reportedly blindfolded his 13-year-old daughter and drove her to an animist's shrine, where they stripped her naked and started to perform traditional rituals. The animist, however, rejected the girl as sacrifice because she was menstruating. The UPF did not arrest the man by year's end.

Sexual Harassment: The law criminalizes sexual harassment and provides for penalties of up to 14 years' imprisonment, but authorities did not effectively enforce the law. Sexual harassment was a widespread problem in homes, schools, universities, workplaces, and in public spaces. Local media reported numerous incidents of male senior public servants in the legislature and judiciary who demanded sexual favors from female subordinates in exchange for job retention, promotion, and nomination for official trips. Local media reported that public attorney Samantha Mwesigye on March 10 petitioned the Office of the Prime Minister seeking action against her superior, Deputy Solicitor General Christopher Gashirabake, who, she said, sexually harassed her for 10 years. Mwesigye noted

that she had received no assistance despite having written to the Solicitor General several times over the years and had instead been advised to “use peaceful means” to resolve the issue instead of instituting a sexual harassment committee to carry out investigations as mandated by law. On May 20, the Solicitor General said he had finally formed a committee to investigate Mwesigye’s allegations. The committee concluded on August 21 that it had cleared Gashirabake of the sexual harassment allegations having found no evidence to prove that he had victimized Mwesigye. On September 2, local media reported that Mwesigye missed her August salary after the judiciary took her off its payroll. According to local media, the judiciary said Mwesigye went off the payroll automatically after she absconded from work for 30 days.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: The law provides women the same legal status and rights as men, but the government did not enforce the law effectively. Local NGOs reported numerous cases of discrimination against women, including in divorce, employment, education, and owning or managing businesses and property. Many customary laws discriminate against women in adoption, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Under customary laws in many areas, widowed women cannot own or inherit property or retain custody of their children. Local NGOs reported that the government occasionally paid significantly less compensation to women than men in exchange for land it repossessed, while in some cases, it forcefully evicted women without compensation. Traditional divorce law in many areas requires women to meet stricter evidentiary standards than men to prove adultery. In some ethnic groups, men can “inherit” the widows of their deceased brothers. The law does not recognize cohabiting relationships, and women involved in such relationships have no judicial recourse to protect their rights.

Children

Birth Registration: The law accords citizenship to children born inside or outside the country if at least one parent or grandparent is a citizen at the time of birth. Abandoned children younger than age 18 with no known parents are considered citizens, as are children younger than 18 adopted by citizens.

The law requires citizens to register a birth within three months. Lack of birth registration generally did not result in denial of public services although some primary schools, especially those in urban centers, required birth certificates for

enrollment. Enrollment in public secondary schools, universities, and other tertiary institutions required birth certificates. For additional information, see Appendix C.

Education: The law provides for compulsory education through the completion of primary school by age 13, and the government provided tuition-free education in select public primary and secondary schools (ages six to 18 years). Parents, however, were required to provide lunch and schooling materials for their children, expenses that many parents could not afford. Local media and civil society organizations reported that early and forced marriages and teenage pregnancy led to a higher rate of school dropouts for girls than for boys.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits numerous forms of child abuse and provides penalties of 2,400,000 shillings (\$640) or five-year imprisonment or both for persons convicted of abusing children's rights. The law defines "statutory rape" as any sexual contact outside marriage with a child younger than the age of 18, regardless of consent or age of the perpetrator, carrying a maximum penalty of death. Victims' parents, however, often opted to settle cases out of court for a cash or in-kind payment. Corporal punishment in schools is illegal and punishable by up to three-year's imprisonment. The law also provides for protection of children from hazardous employment and harmful traditional practices, including child marriage and FGM/C. Despite the law a pattern of child abuse existed in sexual assault, physical abuse, ritual killings, early marriage, FGM/C, child trafficking, infanticide, and child labor, among other abuses. Local media reported that in the vast majority of schools beating with a cane was the preferred method of discipline. A 2018 UNICEF report stated that three in four children had experienced physical violence both at home and in school. Government statistics also showed that more than one in three girls experienced sexual violence during her childhood, and that most did not report the incidents because they feared they would be shamed or embarrassed. Local media reported in February that traffickers at Arapai market in Soroti district auctioned off children, whose purchasers thereafter often forced them into sexual exploitation and begging (see section 7.c.).

Early and Forced Marriage: The legal minimum age for marriage is 18, but authorities generally did not enforce this law. The DHS 2016 reported that 34 percent of women ages 20-24 married before age 18. Local media and civil society organizations reported that some parents in rural areas forced their teenage daughters into marriage after they got pregnant while others did so to earn dowries. Several local governments passed ordinances to outlaw early marriages. The Buyende District local government requires local government leaders to see birth

certificates for the couple before registering marriages in order to confirm that the couple had reached the age of consent.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law prohibits commercial sexual exploitation, the sale and procurement of sexual services, and practices related to child pornography. It sets the minimum age for consensual sex at 18 years. The government did not enforce the law effectively, however, and the problem was pervasive. On February 29, local media reported that the UPF arrested a 71-year-old German philanthropist, Bernhard Bery Glaser, on allegations that he sexually abused girls at his gender-based-violence shelter in Kalangala district. The UPF reported that Glaser kept 30 girls at the shelter and forced them to take turns sleeping in his bedroom. Local UPF personnel told local media that they approved transfer of the girls to the shelter despite having received prior reports from the community over a five-year period suggesting wrongdoing at the shelter. The government charged Glaser with aggravated defilement and trafficking on April 2. The trial continued at year's end.

Child Soldiers: The LRA, an armed group of Ugandan origin operating in the DRC, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, continued to hold children against their will.

Infanticide or Infanticide of Children with Disabilities: Local media and civil society organizations reported numerous incidents where animists killed children as sacrifice in ancestral worship.

Displaced Children: Local civil society organizations and media reported that poverty and famine drove families in the remote northeast Karamoja region to send many children to Kampala to find work and beg on the streets. Civil society organizations reported that traffickers often manipulated families in Karamoja to sell their children to traffickers with promises that the children would obtain a good education or a profitable job. Instead, traffickers forced the children to beg on the streets of Kampala or other major cities and gave them almost none of what they earned. Kampala City authorities worked with civil society organizations to return Karamojong street children to their families, but often the families soon returned the children to the streets because they partly depended on their collections to maintain their households.

Institutionalized Children: Local NGOs and the UHRC reported that the UPF often detained child and adult suspects in the same cells and held them beyond the legal limit of 48 hours prior to arraignment. The UHRC attributed this to the

absence of juvenile cells at police stations and the continued failure to ascertain the correct age of suspects. According to local media, the UPF also raided several shelters for vulnerable and homeless children where it accused the management of sexually abusing the children.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community had approximately 2,000 members centered in Mbale District, in the eastern part of the country. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental disabilities. It provides for access to education, employment, health services, information, communications, buildings, transportation, and the judicial system for persons with disabilities, but the government did not effectively enforce the law. Local media and activists for persons with disabilities reported that persons with disabilities experienced social prejudice and discrimination in social service delivery and in access to public spaces. According to local media, persons with disabilities said that taxes hampered their access to telecommunication technology. NGOs for persons with disabilities reported that a 2018 tax that levied a daily 200 shillings (\$0.05) fee on social media use made communication expensive for deaf people, who used video online apps to communicate. Local media reported that some parents with children with disabilities hid them from the public out of shame, while some physically restrain them from moving by tethering them to tree trunks. Local civil society organizations reported that the government neither ran any support programming

for persons with albinism, nor made an effort to establish the number of those with albinism or their concerns.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There were reports that the authorities used violence to displace an ethnic community from disputed land. According to local media and opposition politicians, authorities continued to evict members of the Acholi community from the disputed village of Apaa as they had in prior years. Media reports noted that at least 2,100 Acholi whom the UPDF and the Ugandan Wildlife Authority had evicted since 2017 remained displaced, with no access to farming land. On several occasions the government announced that all residents should vacate Apaa village to make way for a wildlife reserve but reversed the decision after uproar from the community's leaders. The president then instituted a committee to devise a peaceful solution to the issue, but the committee did not report its findings by year's end.

Indigenous People

Indigenous minorities continued to accuse the government of marginalization that disabled them from participating in decisions affecting their livelihood. The UHRC reported that the government denied recognition to several ethnic minorities, leading them to “experience a sense of exclusion and marginalization.” The UHRC also reported that the government denied ethnic minorities access to adequate social services, particularly healthcare and education. The UHRC reported that the government continued in its refusal to compensate the Benet and Batwa people, whom it displaced from lands it designated as forest reserves. It noted that primary schools in the western part of the country forced pupils from minority ethnicities to study in the languages spoken by the dominant ethnicity in the region.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Consensual same-sex sexual conduct is illegal according to a colonial-era law that criminalizes “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature” and provides for a penalty of up to life imprisonment. Although the law does not restrict freedoms of expression or peaceful assembly for those speaking out about the human rights of LGBTI persons, in practice the government severely restricted

such rights. The law does not prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, or access to government services.

LGBTI persons faced discrimination, legal restrictions, harassment, violence, and intimidation. Authorities perpetrated violence against LGBTI individuals and blocked some meetings organized by LGBTI persons and activists. Local civil society organizations reported that public and private health-care services turned away LGBTI persons who sought medication and some led community members to beat LGBTI persons who sought health care. Local civil society organizations reported that some LGBTI persons needed to pay bribes to public health-care providers before they received treatment. On October 23, the UPF subjected 16 homosexual and transgender people to forced medical examinations in an effort to “gather evidence” to support criminal charges against them for having participated in activities “against the order of nature.” On May 17, the UPF blocked a public meeting by LGBTI activists and persons to mark the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia. UPF officers arrived at the designated venue an hour in advance and turned away guests, saying it was “an illegal assembly.” According to local civil society organizations, the UPF on August 20 arrested 33 transgender persons who were attending a training on sustainable development goals. On August 21, the government charged the 33 with holding an illegal assembly but later released them on bail. The case continued at year’s end.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

Although the law prohibits discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS, discrimination and stigma were common and inhibited these persons from obtaining treatment and support. Local civil society organizations reported the stigma resulted from limited public knowledge about the methods of HIV transmission as well as “the belief that having HIV is shameful.” Civil society organizations reported that stigma pushed persons living with HIV to exclude themselves from social services and employment opportunities, including care programs. Local media and civil society organizations reported numerous incidents of parents who abandoned children living with HIV; and of persons, particularly men, who abandoned spouses who were living with HIV. The UPF, the UPS, and the UPDF regularly refused to recruit persons who tested positive for HIV, claiming their bodies would be too weak for the rigorous training and subsequent deployment.

In cooperation with the government, international and local NGOs sponsored public awareness campaigns to eliminate the stigma of HIV/AIDS. Government

and HIV/AIDS counselors encouraged the population to test for and share information about HIV/AIDS with their partners and family. Persons with HIV/AIDS formed support groups to promote awareness in their communities.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Mob violence remained a problem. Communities often resorted to mob violence due to a lack of confidence in the UPF and the judiciary to deliver justice. They attacked and killed persons suspected of robbery, murder, rape, theft, ritual sacrifice, and witchcraft, among other crimes. Mobs often beat, lynched, burned, and otherwise brutalized their victims. On June 26, local media reported motorcycle taxi drivers in Kampala attacked two men they suspected of attempting to steal a motorcycle. According to media reports, the motorcycle taxi drivers took turns driving over one of the suspects while others beat the second with sticks and stoned him. The UPF said they managed to disperse the mob and take the suspected thieves to the hospital, but one died soon after admission.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for workers, except members of the armed forces, to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development must register unions before they may engage in collective bargaining.

The law allows unions to conduct activities without interference, prohibits antiunion discrimination by employers, and provides for reinstatement of workers dismissed for union activity. The law also empowers the Minister of Gender, Labor, and Social Development and labor officers to refer disputes to the Industrial Court if initial mediation and arbitration attempts fail.

The government did not effectively enforce applicable labor laws. Civil society organizations said the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development did not allocate sufficient funds to hire, train, and equip labor inspectors to enforce labor laws effectively. Employers who violated a worker's right to form and join a trade union or bargain collectively faced penalties that were generally insufficient to deter violations.

The government generally did not protect the constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Antiunion discrimination occurred, and labor activists accused several private companies of deterring employees from joining unions. On May 24, the leadership of the Uganda National Teachers Union claimed that resident district commissioners and other local officials were threatening teachers to stop their industrial action or face repercussions.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children, but does not prohibit prison labor. The law states that prison labor constitutes forced labor only if a worker is “hired out to, or placed at the disposal of, a private individual, company, or association.” Those convicted of using forced labor are subject to penalties that are ineffective to deter violations.

Local civil society organizations and media reported that many citizens working overseas, particularly in the Gulf States, became victims of forced labor. Civil society organizations reported that traffickers and legitimate recruitment companies continued to send mainly female jobseekers to Gulf countries where many employers treated workers as indentured servants, withheld pay, and subjected them to other harsh conditions. Media reported on several local women trafficked to the Middle East, some of whom suffered serious injury or death.

Also see the Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor but allows children as young as 12 years of age to do some types of hazardous work under adult supervision. Children are required to attend school until age 13. This standard makes children ages 13 to 15 vulnerable to child labor because they are not required to attend school but are not legally permitted to do most types of work. The law places limitations on working hours and provides for occupational safety and health restrictions for children. The government did not effectively enforce the law and penalties were insufficient to deter violations.

Child labor was common, especially in the informal sector. Local civil society organizations and the UHRC reported that children worked in fishing, gold and

sand mining, cattle herding, grasshopper collecting, truck loading, street vending, begging, scrap collecting, street hawking, stone quarrying, brick making, road construction and repair, car washing, domestic services, service work (restaurants, bars, shops), cross-border smuggling, and commercial farming (including the production of tea, coffee, sugarcane, vanilla, tobacco, rice, cotton, charcoal, and palm oil). Local civil society organizations and media reported that poverty led children to drop out of school to work on commercial farms while some parents took their children along to work in artisanal mines to supplement family incomes. According to government statistics, children from nearly half of all families living on less than \$1 a day dropped out of school to work. Local civil society organizations reported that orphaned children sought work due to the absence of parental authority. Local civil society organizations and local media also reported commercial sexual exploitation of children (see section 6).

Local NGOs reported that children who worked as artisanal gold miners were exposed to mercury, and many were unaware of the medium- to long-term effects of the exposure. They felt compelled to continue working due to poverty and a lack of employment alternatives. Children also suffered injuries in poorly dug mine shafts that often collapsed.

On June 18, a group of government officials, journalists, and civil society organization staff traveled to the eastern portion of the country to verify media reports of a market where traffickers sold children. The group reported they found girls ages 12-16, usually from Karamoja, who had been sold for 20,000-50,000 shillings (\$5.33-\$13.33) and been taken to Kampala where they worked as beggars, domestic workers, or prostitutes in the commercial sex trade.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings>, and the Department of Labor's *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

While the law prohibits discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, the government did not effectively enforce the law, and penalties were insufficient to deter violations. Although the law prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, refugee or stateless status, disability, age, language, and HIV or communicable disease status, it did not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and

LGBTI persons faced social and legal discrimination. From March 2018 to June, Pius Bigirimana, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development, led the African delegation in negotiating the standards of the International Labor Organization for violence and harassment in the world of work. Bigirimana led the Africa delegation in a walk out in 2018 in protest to the inclusion of LGBTI people as a vulnerable group. In June, Bigirimana successfully negotiated to remove the broader definition of vulnerable groups that included LGBTI people among others, arguing that the list was not exhaustive, and each member state would be free to determine what it considered vulnerable groups.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The law technically provides for a national minimum wage much lower than the government's official poverty income level. This minimum wage standard was never implemented, and the level has not changed since 1984. On February 19, parliament passed the Minimum Wage Bill of 2015, which included provision for a board to establish minimum wages for different sectors. Official parliamentary communications reported that on August 21 President Museveni declined to sign the bill, arguing that existing law was sufficient. The government did not enforce existing wage laws effectively and as a result, penalties were insufficient to deter violations.

The maximum legal workweek is 48 hours, and the maximum workday is 10 hours. The law provides that the workweek may be extended to 56 hours per week, including overtime, with the employee's consent. An employee may work more than 10 hours in a single day if the average number of hours over a period of three weeks does not exceed 10 hours per day, or 56 hours per week. For employees who work beyond 48 hours in a single week, the law requires employers to pay a minimum of 1.5 times the employee's normal hourly rate for the overtime hours, and twice the employee's normal hourly rate for work on public holidays. For every four months of continuous employment, an employee is entitled to seven days of paid annual leave. Nonetheless, local civil society organizations reported that most domestic employees worked all year round without leave.

The law establishes occupational safety and health standards and regulations for all workers, but according to local civil society organizations, the Ministry of Labor's Department of Occupational Safety and Health did not fully enforce them. The law authorizes labor inspectors to access and examine any workplace, issue fines,

and mediate some labor disputes. While the law allows workers to remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardizing their employment, legal protection for such workers was ineffective.

Authorities did not effectively enforce labor laws due to insufficient resources for monitoring. The number of inspectors was insufficient to enforce the law. The labor officers often depended on complainants and local civil society organizations to pay for their travel to inspection sites. Platform for Labor Action (PLA) reported that many of the 73 labor officers were in fact dual-hatted as social workers and only did labor-related work when a complainant reported an abuse.

According to PLA and the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU), most workers were unaware of their employers' responsibility to ensure a safe working environment, and many did not challenge unsafe working conditions, for fear of losing their jobs.

Labor officials reported that labor laws did not protect workers in the informal economy, including many domestic and agricultural workers. According to government statistics, the informal sector employed up to 86 percent of the labor force. The formal pension systems covered less than 10 percent of the working population.

PLA reported that violations of standard wages, overtime pay, or safety and health standards were common in the manufacturing sector.