

## **UN INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE**

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### **JOINT PRESS STATEMENT**

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025 | UHRC HEADQUARTERS**

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#### **Introduction**

On 26th June 2025, Uganda joins the global community to mark the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This day is more than a symbolic gesture—it is a solemn call to action to end all forms of torture, reaffirm human dignity, and ensure justice for survivors.

Torture is a stain on our humanity. It is not just illegal—it is immoral. Torture degrades, dehumanizes, and destroys. It violates not only the body but the very essence of human dignity. And it has no place in any society that claims to uphold the rule of law.

Today, as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), the Coalition Against Torture (CAT), the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U) and our partners stand united, we renew our unshakeable commitment: Torture must end. Survivors must be supported. Perpetrators must face justice.

Uganda's legal framework is unambiguous. Article 24 and Article 44(a) of the 1995 Constitution affirm that freedom from torture is absolute and non-derogable. No person, no authority, no circumstance can justify torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

The Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (2012) and Uganda's ratification of the UN Convention Against Torture reinforce this duty. These laws must not remain ink on paper—they must be enforced without fear or favour.

We honour the resilience of survivors. Their scars—physical, psychological, and emotional—are lasting reminders of the cost of silence and impunity. Many live with trauma that affects their health, families, livelihoods, and sense of safety.

We must do more than condemn torture. We must listen to survivors, believe them, and ensure they have access to justice, rehabilitation, and meaningful redress.

As Uganda prepares for the 2026 General Elections, we are reminded that electoral seasons can often heighten tensions. These moments, while essential to our democracy, sometimes become flashpoints for violence and abuse.

Uganda has robust electoral laws—the Constitution, the Electoral Commission Act, the Presidential Elections Act, and the Political Parties and Organisations Act, among others. These legal instruments are designed to ensure peaceful, fair, and inclusive elections. But laws alone are not enough—they must be upheld, and accountability must follow any breach.

While we acknowledge improvements in Uganda's electoral processes, we also raise concern that acts of torture and abuse tend to increase during periods of political contestation. This is not just a pattern—it is a warning. Security must never come at the cost of human rights.



Law enforcement must operate with restraint, professionalism, and absolute respect for human dignity.

Survivors of torture often suffer from long-term psychological effects—depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health conditions. These are injuries that are invisible but no less real. Uganda's limited access to mental health care only deepens this crisis.

We call on government and partners to prioritize psychosocial support and rehabilitation for survivors. Healing is not optional. It is a right.

We urge the Government of Uganda to reaffirm its zero-tolerance policy on torture. This commitment must translate into swift investigations, transparent legal processes, and real consequences for those who violate human rights, regardless of rank or role.

Every allegation of torture must be taken seriously. Silence breeds impunity, and impunity destroys public trust.

We call on all law enforcement and security agencies to act in line with Article 221 of the Constitution, and international human rights standards. Upholding human rights is not a choice—it is a legal and moral duty.

As elections approach, the conduct of security forces will shape not just the safety of the process, but the integrity of our democracy. We remind every officer: your role is to protect the people, not to instill fear.

We recognize and commend the tireless efforts of civil society, medical professionals, legal advocates, and human rights defenders. Their work in supporting survivors, documenting violations, and holding systems accountable is essential to the fight against torture.

Let us build stronger partnerships between state institutions and civil society. Human rights are not a competition—they are a shared responsibility.

In the lead-up to and beyond the 2026 elections, we commit to:

1. **Raise Public Awareness:** We will intensify public education on the right to be free from torture and the avenues for redress.
2. **Promote Peaceful Elections:** Through civic education and voter engagement, we will champion nonviolence and democratic participation.
3. **Engage Political Leaders:** We will foster dialogue with parties and state institutions to promote tolerance, restraint, and respect for human rights.
4. **Monitor and Report Abuses:** We will document torture allegations and provide legal and psychosocial support to survivors.
5. **Work with Security Agencies:** We will continuously remind them of their obligations under the Constitution, the PPTA, and the Human Rights Enforcement Act (HREA).

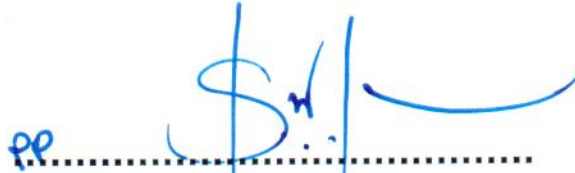
This joint commemoration includes nationwide outreach activities, community engagements, and this press briefing. We invite all Ugandans to participate—in person or virtually—and to stand in solidarity with survivors.

We close with a reminder: Every Ugandan is a human rights defender. The fight against torture cannot be left to institutions alone. We must all raise our voices. We must all refuse to look away.

Let this day mark not just remembrance, but resolve.

No more silence. No more torture. No more impunity.

**For God and My Country**



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