



THE HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE UGANDA (HRCU)

WEEKLY UPDATE ON THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN UGANDA AND KEY EMERGING HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC PREVALENCE

Issue no.21: The Week of 24th - 30th August 2020

INTRODUCTION

At the start of the week, there were speculations about another COVID-19 lockdown because of increased number of COVID-19 infections and deaths in the country. The public anxiously waited for the presidential address on Tuesday 25th

August 2020 which eventually died out when no address was held. Uganda outwardly expressed that it was not ready for another lockdown despite the recent spike in the COVID-19 cases. Various issues noted from the health sector situation in managing the virus outbreak, journey through to the 2021 general elections and other human rights issues.

LATEST UPDATES ON COVID-19 IN UGANDA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD

Health institutions continue to demand for funding to treat COVID-19 patients. Some institutions like Mulago Hospital admitted that they have never received the COVID-19 funds. On 25th August 2020, the Executive Director Mulago Hospital Dr.

Baterena Byarugaba while appearing before the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament said that Mulago Hospital had never been facilitated with the COVID-19 funds yet they have been handling patients with the virus. As a result, MPs have henceforth called upon the government to fund Mulago Hospital.

MPS call for financing to Mulago Hospital to handle Covid-19 patients



BUKOTO COUNTY EAST MP HON. FLORENCE NAMAYANJA SAYS MULAGO HOSPITAL HAS NOT BEEN FACILITATED WITH COVID-19 FUNDING FROM GOVERNMENT.

For more information:

<https://livenewschatroom.com/2020/08/25/mps-call-for-financing-to-mulago-hospital-to-handle-covid-19-patients/>

It is evident that the Ministry of Health (MoH) is faced with financial constraints amidst the increased number of COVID-19 infections. On 27th August, the Ministry introduced the COVID-19 testing fee of Uganda Shillings 240,500 to be paid by certain organisations effective 1st September 2020. This new mode came in after Ministry of Health received several request from different organisations to have their staff tested which the ministry could not sustain due to inadequate testing kits and resource constraints.

On Saturday 29th August 2020, Uganda through State House, organized a national day of prayer under the theme: 'Thus Far the Lord Helped Us' 1 Samuel Chapter 7 (Bible). During the prayers, the President urged Ugandans to embrace discipline, and not let their guard down and warned that, ***"if we are careless, then we shall have to organise burial teams"***.

COVID-19: Museveni voices need for discipline

By Joseph Kizza Added 29th August 2020 01:26 PM

During the national prayers at Entebbe, President Museveni says discussions are ongoing on how to handle the reopening of churches, schools and bars.



Washing of hands with soap and water is part of the discipline encouraged to prevent being infected with the coronavirus. (Credit: Miriam Namutebi)

<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1525832/covid-19-museveni-voices-discipline>

By 29th August 2020, 81 new COVID-19 cases were confirmed bringing the total of confirmed cases to 2,928, a total of 30 deaths and 1,288 recoveries.

Internationally, during the United Nations Crisis Management Team (UNCMT) meeting on 26th August 2020, WHO briefed on the epidemiological situation and stressed that COVID-19 continues to pose a very high risk for the global population due to its ability to spread rapidly and with the capacity to manage this outbreak still limited in many places, especially in humanitarian and fragile settings.

Globally, there were 24,257,989 infections and 827,246 deaths registered by 28th August 2020

Reference:

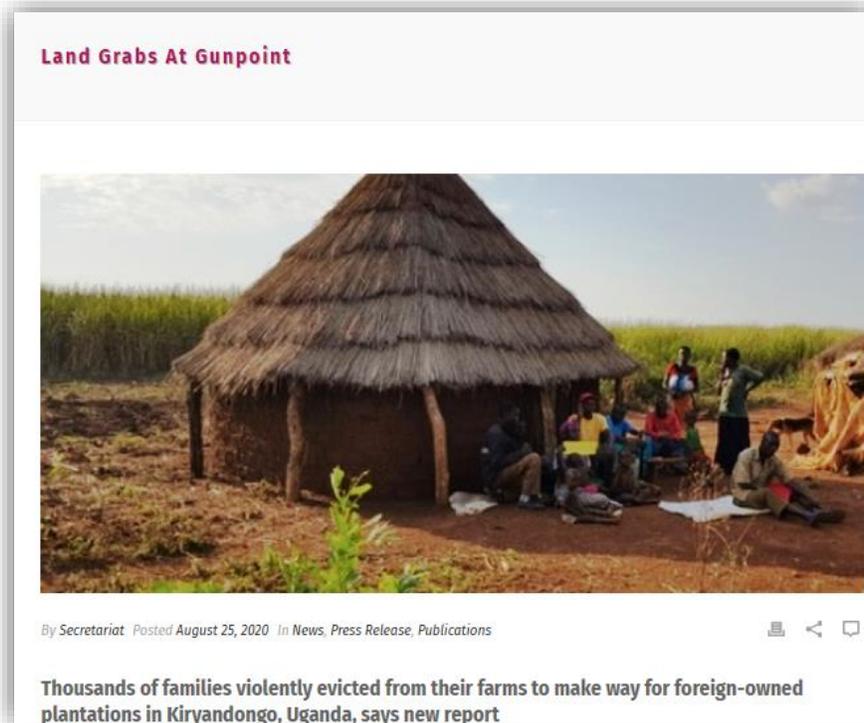
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/wou-28-august-approved.pdf?sfvrsn=d9e49c20_2

KEY HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER ISSUES THAT DEVELOPED IN THE COURSE OF THE WEEK (2)

RIGHT TO PROPERTY (UNLAWFUL LAND EVICTIONS)

A new report released on 25th August 2020 showed indicated unlawful evictions of locals from their homes. Three multinational companies – Agilis Partners, Kiryandongo Sugar Limited and Great Season SMC Limited were reported as those involved in grabbing land, violently evicting people from their homes and causing untold humiliation and grief to thousands of farming families residing in Kiryandongo district.

The findings contained in the report were conducted by three organizations – Witness Radio – Uganda, Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and GRAIN that operate in the areas where thousands have been evicted and more at the verge of losing their land under the guise of development by foreign companies.



Click the link below for more information:

<https://afsafrika.org/land-grabs-at-gunpoint/>

CORRUPTION AND EMBEZZLEMENT OF PUBLIC FUNDS

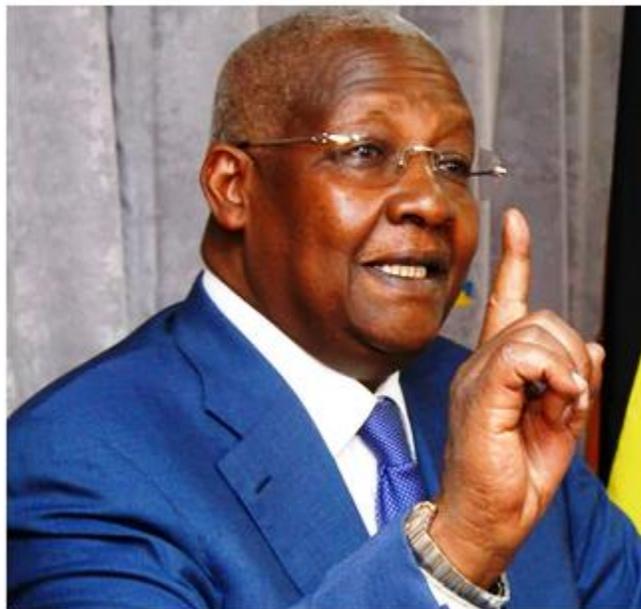
A section of Members of Parliament (MPs) demand a full-blown probe into financial management at all Uganda's missions abroad. The call came in the wake of a decision on Monday 24th August by authorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to recall staff at Uganda's mission in Denmark, who were implicated in a scheme to embezzle unspent cash from Financial Year 2019/2020, which should have been returned to the Consolidated Fund.

Section 17(2) of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 2005 stipulates: "A vote that does not expend money appropriated to it for the financial year shall at the close of the financial year, repay the money to the Consolidated Fund."

The decision to recall the diplomats follows the publication by Daily Monitor on Monday, of a story based on an audio clip that captured diplomats at the mission holding a zoom meeting and discussing how to steal the funds. The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Patrick Mugoya, indicated that the Ministry had embarked on investigations into the alleged fraud.

Probe finances at all missions - MPs

SUNDAY AUGUST 30 2020



Sam Kuteesa, Foreign Affairs Minister

Follow link below for more information:

<https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Probe-finances-at-all-missions---MPs/688334-5616334-5hye1tz/index.html>

FIRE OUTBREAKS AT HOME

On 28th August at about 8:00 pm, a fire broke out in a house belonging to Godfrey Lule, 40, a resident of Kisimbiri A village, Wakiso Town Council in Wakiso District. Kampala Metropolitan police spokesperson, Patrick Onyango, said information they got from members of the community revealed that fire broke out in a house.

Police thus appealed to the community not to leave charcoal stoves or burning candles without an adult attending to them.



Reference:

<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1525851/children-burnt-death-wakiso>

THE NSSF AMENDMENT BILL

Since March, when the lockdown started, some NSSF members have been pushing for the passing of the NSSF Bill to enable them get 20% of their savings to cushion them from the economic hardships created by the COVID-19 economic crisis. However, the delayed passing of the Bill prompted Workers' MP Dr. Sam Lyomoki to

spend a night on Wednesday 26th August at the Parliamentary chambers protesting what he described as the delayed passing of the National Social Security (NSSF) Amendment Bill. Lyomoki threatened to go on hunger strike if the House failed to pass the Bill into law.

[Home](#) \ [National](#) \ [MP Lyomoki sleeps in Parliament over delayed NSSF Bill](#)

MP Lyomoki sleeps in Parliament over delayed NSSF Bill

By Paul Kiwuuwa Added 29th August 2020 11:12 AM

He notified the Speaker and the House that he had come with his bedding, which he would sleep on in the Parliament chambers



Lyomoki protesting the delayed NSSF Bill at Parliament. Photo by Maria Wamala

<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1525825/mp-lyomoki-sleeps-parliament-delayed-nssf>

PUBLIC GATHERINGS AMIDST COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Police in Mbale City fired tear gas and live bullets to disperse National Unity Platform (NUP) supporters who were trying to forcibly enter Mbale High Court. Kyadondo East MP Robert Kyagulanyi alias Bobi Wine was in Mbale to hear the cross-examination of the Inspector General of Police, the Resident District Commissioner, Regional Police commander, District Police Commander and the Officer in Charge of Mbale Central Police Station. Kyagulanyi and his lawyers arrived at the court premises at around 7:30 am and parked outside the gate after security

personnel denied him access before the official opening time. At around 8:00 am the gate was opened to let the legislator and his team into the premises. Later on, a group of People Power supporters and the MP's press team started flocking to the premises, but on reaching the gate, they found anti-riot Police heavily armed with tear gas and rifles. The refusal to allow some of the supporters access to the premises triggered a heated verbal exchange between People Power supporters.

The security personnel maintained that they would not allow all the many supporters inside the court premises, insisting that only the lawyers and a few select people would be allowed into the court.



<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1525787/police-fires-tear-gas-disperse-bobi-wine-supporters-mbale-court>

One may say that the COVID-19 guidelines and regulations have given the security agents a green light to continue suppressing public gatherings amidst the advocacy

to nullify some provisions in the POMA. However, the COVID-19 situation remains a life threatening situation that requires all round discipline by the public.

A CALL TO WEAR SUBSTANDARD MASKS

The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) warns the public against using substandard masks, which are currently on sale on streets across major towns and urban centres in the country.

According to the standards regulator, it is imperative for the public to use the right quality masks as the country grapples with the coronavirus pandemic, whose infections have recently reached the 2,000 mark. The deputy executive director of management and finance, Patricia Bageine Ejalu, said the regulator has already availed standards that must be followed in the making of the masks to prevent the public from contracting the virus.

Ejalu's remarks follow complaints from the Government that some contracted manufacturers were producing substandard masks, thus putting the lives of innocent Ugandans at risk.



Click the link below:

<https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1525815/unbs-warns-public-fake-masks>

CONCLUSION

With the continued uncertainties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that new ideas, recommendations are shared and acted upon to create a more favourable environment that encourages respect for fundamental human rights. HRCU shall continue to engage with HRDs to ensure that their working environment is favourable by providing legal aid, through research, documentation and advocacy.

The welfare and safety of HRDs and all citizens is paramount and therefore HRCU shall continually encourage all to prioritise their health by strictly following the guidelines issued by the MoH.