



JUST ATONEMENT INC.

justice  
hope peace unity equal opportunity  
golden age  
progress sustainability democracy freedom  
human rights harmony civilization

**Just Atonement Inc.**

119 W 24th Street, Second Floor  
New York, New York 10011

Executive Director: [Dave Inder Comar](#)  
Email: [inder@justatonement.org](mailto:inder@justatonement.org)  
Telephone: [+1 646 600 5470](tel:+16466005470)

Just Atonement Inc. (JAI) is a global network of advocates who serve at the front lines in defending democracy, human rights, and a livable planet.

JAI was founded in the United States of America in 2017.

JAI invites and organizes legal professionals globally into a single order and aligns a vision of a peaceful, sustainable world, governed by the democratic rule of law; litigates in courts all over the world on cutting edge human rights cases to build peace and sustainability, and to defend democracy; and advocates for a vision of a true Golden Age for humanity: a world where countries settle their disputes peacefully, manage social and economic systems that are in harmony with the planet, and govern themselves through the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights.

JAI submits this written submission with respect to the Universal Periodic Review of the Republic of Uganda.

**Summary of Conclusions**

1. We applaud Uganda for being a leader in Africa on the issue of climate change by being the first African country to pass and endorse its Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership plan.
2. With an economy that is heavily based on agriculture, Uganda is a nation particularly susceptible to climate change. As such, Uganda must take steps to address the urgent matter of climate change, which will affect the safety and quality of life of its people.
3. Democratic norms in Uganda have deteriorated, and the legitimacy of Uganda's democracy is at risk. Uganda must address this issue in order to ensure equality and justice for its people.



4. The LGBTQ+ community faces persecution in Uganda, as relations between same-sex people violate criminal law and recent legislation makes it difficult for members of the LGBTQ+ community to obtain safety, equality, and justice. As such, Uganda must take action to protect the rights of those in the LGBTQ+ community and repeal any legislation that is discriminatory and harmful to this group.
5. We commend the Constitutional Court of Uganda for protecting people's freedom to assemble by declaring unconstitutional section 36 of the Police Act.
6. The Ugandan government has violated the freedoms of press and assembly. The government must cease these violations and make reforms to protect these freedoms.
7. Ugandan government agencies have allegedly engaged in unlawful killings and torture. Reforms must be implemented to ensure that this does not happen and that those who engage in this unlawful behavior are held accountable.
8. Prisoners in Uganda face inhumane conditions. Uganda must pass prison reform in order to afford its prisoners with the dignity deserved by all human beings.
9. Uganda is in the minority of states that employ capital punishment. Uganda should either abolish capital punishment or reduce its usage to only the worst offenses.

## **Analysis**

### *Climate Change*

10. **The breakdown and collapse of the Earth's climate system is imminent and may have already commenced.** Climate change threatens the lives and freedoms of the people of Uganda. Climate change in Uganda is expected to increase by up to 1.5 degrees Celsius in the next 20 years and up to 4.3 degrees Celsius by the year 2080. These changes will cause volatility in Uganda's rainfall and temperature, and could have a potentially devastating effect on water resources, food security, human health, and infrastructure.
11. Life in Uganda is likely to be heavily impacted by climate change. Agriculture is the country's economic backbone. The environment and natural resource sectors contribute 55% of total gross domestic product to Uganda's economy. Thus, climate change in Uganda will disrupt an economy that is particularly dependent on environmental factors.
12. As a low-income country,<sup>1</sup> climate change will heavily impact Uganda's most poor and vulnerable. Climate change will lead to increased poverty and food insecurity, and it will affect the quality of life for all, especially for those who work in environmental and natural resource sectors.
13. Climate change is also likely to affect Lake Victoria, as there is evidence that it has been doing so for the past 10 years. Lake Victoria is one of the world's largest tropical lakes and the

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/poorest-countries-in-the-world>



source for the Nile river. Climate change could cause this lake to dry up, which would in turn result in devastating water shortages for the Ugandan people. The drying of Lake Victoria would also have other crippling effects. Uganda would lose its primary source of hydroelectricity, the fishing industry of Kenya and Tanzania could collapse, and the livelihoods of approximately 40 million people living in the Victoria basin would be impacted.

14. In June of 2018, Uganda developed and endorsed its Nationally Determined Contribution Partnership plan to deliver on commitments made under the Paris Agreement. It was the first African country to do so. Some key commitments in this plan include reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 22% by 2030, building climate resilience, and reducing vulnerability of climate sensitive sectors. We applaud Uganda for putting together this plan, and encourage Uganda to continue to lead in Africa on the issue of climate change.

### *Recommendations*

15. Uganda should continue to confront the effects of climate change in order to support the safety and quality of life of its people. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights recognizes a right to life, and this right could be infringed in Uganda if the government does not take the appropriate steps to mitigate the effects of climate change.

16. Although Uganda has taken many steps to mitigate climate change, these steps fall short of what is necessary to protect the human rights of its people. Uganda should continue to lead on climate change reform to ensure a safer and healthier future for its people.

17. Uganda should work with other bordering countries of Lake Victoria, including Kenya and Tanzania, to protect the lake from the devastating impacts climate change may have on it and the people whose livelihoods depend on it.

### *Democracy*

18. Although Uganda holds regular elections, the credibility of Ugandan democracy has deteriorated over time, as abuse by police forces, censorship of the media, and manipulation of state resources have allowed the country's ruling party, the National Resistance Party, to retain power.

19. Leaders of opposition parties and political movements are often arrested in Uganda. For example, Bobi Wine, a parliament member and leader of the People Power group, was placed under house arrest preceding a press conference he planned to hold. Intimidation from government forces puts pressure on democracy, and delegitimizes its basic principles.

20. Not all Ugandan people are eligible to participate in Ugandan government. Specifically, the interests of certain ethnic groups and minorities are not well-represented in the Ugandan political process. Due to heavy discrimination and persecution, the LGBTQ+ community is not represented in Ugandan politics.



### *Recommendations*

21. The protection of the rule of law and participation of all peoples in the political process are core rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Uganda is a party. Further, Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights protects the right of all citizens to participate freely in their government. When democracy works effectively, it promotes the equality of all people and gives a voice to those who may otherwise be voiceless. As such, Uganda must commit to improving democratic norms.
22. Uganda must end tactics that repress democratic political participation, including police intimidation, censorship, and manipulation of state resources.
23. Uganda must reform its electoral system so that all people can freely participate, including underrepresented minorities and the LGBTQ+ community.

### *LGBTQ+ Rights*

24. The LGBTQ+ community in Uganda faces heavy discrimination and persecution. In Uganda, same-sex relations are illegal, and Uganda punishes “carnal knowledge” among people of the same sex with up to life in prison.
25. In May of 2021, Uganda’s parliament adopted the Sexual Offenses Bill 2019. Although there are some provisions in the bill designed to protect victims of sexual violence, such as harsher punishments for sexual offenders and protection for victims at the trial stage, the bill also criminalizes behavior for entire groups of people. Gay rights activists in Uganda fear that this is a backdoor reintroduction of the 2013 Homosexuality Bill.
26. The Sexual Offenses Bill criminalizes sexual acts between consenting adults while allowing some nonconsensual acts to go unpunished. The bill removed a provision that clarified that consent can be withdrawn “at any time before or during the performance of a sexual act.”
27. The Sexual Offenses Bill criminalizes “unnatural offenses”, by which is meant sexual acts between same-sex people. Criminalization of same-sex acts places barriers on LGBTQ+ survivors of sexual violence to seek help or pursue legal action.
28. During the COVID-19 pandemic, security forces used the excuse of controlling the spread of COVID-19 to arbitrarily arrest and detain dozens of people from the LGBTQ+ community.

### *Recommendations*

29. Uganda must take a stand against the persecution of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. The United Nations Human Rights Council has passed resolutions calling for equal



rights for the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>2</sup> Uganda must decriminalize consensual same-sex relations and take steps toward reform in order to ensure equal rights for all people regardless of sexual orientation.

30. The Ugandan parliament must repeal the Sexual Offenses Bill. This bill criminalizes the existence of specific groups of people, and it directly affronts their safety and opportunities to attain justice and equality.

### *Freedom of the Press and Assembly*

31. Freedom of the press has been under attack in Uganda. Specifically, the Ugandan government has imposed regulations on blogs and website owners requiring them to have authorization to post blogs and websites.

32. On May 30th of 2020, the Constitutional Court of Uganda declared section 36 of the Police Act to be unconstitutional. This act allowed police to use unlimited force in dispersing crowds with no liability for death or injuries. We commend the Constitutional Court for protecting the people's freedom to assemble.

### *Recommendations*

33. Under Article 19 of the ICCPR, individuals have the right to free speech and expression. These freedoms are central to the establishment of democracy and the recognition of human rights. Uganda should adhere to this by repealing any regulations that hinder the freedom of expression and by reforming its laws to allow people to peaceably assemble with minimal government interference.

### *Unlawful Killings and Torture*

34. There have been numerous reports of unlawful killings by Ugandan government agencies, including some killings due to torture.

35. Although Ugandan law prohibits torture, there were many credible reports that Ugandan security forces engaged in this behavior.

36. Security forces have unlawfully killed at least 66<sup>3</sup> people since March 2020, and at least twelve of these people were killed for violating COVID-19 regulations.

37. Activist Kakwenza Rukirishaija claims to have been tortured by military police. He was arrested in April and September of 2020 and held under the charges of “committing negligent acts likely to spread infectious disease” and inciting violence and promoting sectarianism. Both

---

<sup>2</sup>A/HRC/Res/32/2

[https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/RES/32/2](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/RES/32/2)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/uganda/report-uganda/>



of these arrests were related to a book he had written which criticized the President and Ugandan government.

38. Francis Zaake was arrested in April of 2020 after being charged with disobeying COVID-19 regulations. He claims to have been tortured for several days, and in May of 2020 a video surfaced from Lubaga Hospital in Kampala, in which he appeared with his face swollen.

### *Recommendations*

39. Torture and unlawful killings directly violate international law. Ugandan government agencies must end this behavior as applicable, and reform must be implemented to ensure that those who engage in unlawful killing and torture are held accountable. We call on the Ugandan government to investigate whether human rights violations were committed against Kakwenza Rukirishaija and Francis Zaake and to protect and defend the human rights of activists in Uganda.

### *Prisons*

40. Many prisoners in Uganda experience human rights violations which include but are not limited to cruel and inhumane treatment from wardens, corrupt labor practices, poor living conditions, and inadequate healthcare.

41. Prisons nationwide operate at 224 percent capacity, which is well above international standards. In one prison visited by the Human Rights Watch, the capacity was being operated at 3,200 percent.<sup>4</sup>

42. Disease control in Ugandan prisons continues to be a problem, a problem that was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. HIV rates in Ugandan prisons is 11 percent, which is twice the international average. Controlling the COVID-19 pandemic in Ugandan prisons was particularly hindered by the fact that thousands were jailed for violating COVID-19 guidelines.

### *Recommendations*

43. Uganda must take steps to reform its prisons. Article 10 of the ICCPR provides that all persons “shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.” Uganda should improve conditions for prisoners so that they may retain the dignity and quality of life that should be afforded to all humans.

### *Death Penalty*

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/07/14/even-dead-bodies-must-work/health-hard-labor-and-abuse-ugandan-prisons>



44. Uganda retains use of the death penalty. Uganda is in the minority of states that continue to use capital punishment. Ugandan capital offenses include murder, kidnapping with intent to murder, terrorism, aggravated robbery, and aggravated defilement. The United Nations calls on states to reduce usage of capital punishment only to the most serious crimes and to respect the rights of those on death row.

### ***Recommendations***

45. Uganda should cease to use capital punishment in its criminal justice system in accordance with international trends to abolish usage of the death penalty. At the very least, Uganda should limit the availability of capital punishment only to the most serious offenses in accordance with resolutions passed by the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.<sup>5</sup>

\*\*\*

### **Acknowledgement**

*This submission was prepared by Dave Inder Comar (Stanford 2001, Stanford 2002, NYU School of Law 2005) and Aubrey Kelley (Western Kentucky University 2020, Columbia Law School 2023)*

Word Count: 2,321

---

<sup>5</sup>General Assembly Res. 62/149  
<https://undocs.org/A/RES/62/149>  
HRC Res. 30/5  
<https://www.refworld.org/publisher,UNHRC,,,56b1c15b4,0.html>