

UGANDA

1. PRESENTATION¹

Basic Facts²

Name of Country	Republic of Uganda (Uganda)
Capital	Kampala
Population	28,195,754 (July 2006)
Area	236,040 sq km
Average Life Expectancy	52.67 (2006 estimate)
Ethnic Groups	Baganda 17%, Banyankole 8%, Basoga 8%, Iteso 8%, Bakiga 7%, Langi 6%, Rwanda 6%, Bagisu 5%, Acholi 4%, Lugbara 4%, Batoro 3%, Bunyoro 3%, Alur 2%, Bagwere 2%, Bakonjo 2%, Jopadhola 2%, Karamojong 2%, Rundi 2%, non-African (European, Asian, Arab) 1%, other 8%
GDP per capita, PPP	\$1,800 (2005 est.)

Community of Democracies

Previous participation	None
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Timeline of Recent Major Events in Uganda:

- **1971** January – Milton Obote toppled in coup led by Idi Amin.
- **1979** February – Tanzania invades Uganda, unifying the various anti-Amin forces under the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF).
- **1979** April – Amin forced to flee Uganda; UNLF takes over under President Lule.
- **1979** June – Lule overthrown; replaced by Godfrey Binaisa.
- **1980** May – Binaisa overthrown; replaced by UNLF Military Commission.
- **1980** December – Military Commission organizes fraudulent elections. Apollo Milton Obote becomes president.
- **1986** January – National Resistance Army takes Kampala, installing Yoweri Museveni as president.
- **1995** October – New constitution maintains the ban on political activity.
- **1996** February – Museveni wins Uganda's first direct presidential election.
- **2000** July – Ugandan voters reject a return to multi-party politics and favor continuing the "no-party" system.
- **2001** February – Museveni wins another term in office, beating his rival Dr. Kizza Besigye.
- **2002** December – Peace deal signed with Uganda National Rescue Front rebels.
- **2005** June – Parliament reforms constitution allowing Museveni to seek new term.
- **2005** July – Voters back a referendum to return to multi-party politics.
- **2005** November – Main opposition leader Kizza Besigye is imprisoned.

¹ Principal author: Democracy Coalition Project

² Source: CIA World Factbook at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>, accessed on 11 July 2006.

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- **2006** February – President Museveni wins multi-party elections, taking 59% of the vote against the 37% share of his rival, Kizza Besigye.
- **2006** August – The government and the LRA sign a truce aimed at ending their long-running conflict.
- **2007** February – Stagnation of peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government in the Sudanese city of Juba.
- **2007** November – Kampala will be hosting the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

2. BACKGROUND

The year 2006 was critical for Uganda, with the celebration of presidential elections effectively giving President Museveni a fifth term in office and the ongoing negotiations with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to terminate more than 20 years of cruel conflict in the country's northern regions.

Although the figure of President Museveni still commands significant support among the Ugandan population, his international standing has gradually eroded as a result of his amendment of the constitution to remain in power. Museveni's popular support derives from the maintenance of stability after the cruel dictatorships and widespread human rights abuses of the 1970s and 1980s: the regime of Idi Amin (1971-79) left around 300,000 dead, while the rule of Milton Obote (1980-85) resulted in at least another 100,000 deaths. Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRM) seized power in 1986, and during the 1990s he was lauded by the West as part of a new generation of African democratic leaders. However, political party activities were restricted until 2005 in the belief that such restrictions helped reduce the sectarian violence that plagued the country over the previous decades. Under the non-party or "Movement" system, political parties were allowed to exist but could not campaign in elections or field candidates directly.

The reintroduction of a multi-party system after 19 years, following a referendum held on 28 July 2005, was overshadowed by Museveni's parallel alteration of the constitution to remove the limitation of a maximum of two consecutive presidential terms thus potentially extending his 20-year reign indefinitely. The continued harassment of opposition forces, accusations of widespread corruption and his government's meddling since 1997 in the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and other regional conflicts have also weakened Museveni's backing by the international community.

In recent months, however, most attention in Uganda has focused on the negotiations between the government and the leadership of the LRA, the guerrilla group that has terrorized the North of the country during the last 20 years, displacing between 1.5 and 2 million people, killing tens of thousands of civilians and abducting over 25,000 children to serve as soldiers.³ Negotiations led to a fragile truce in 26 August 2006 whose initial

³ UN Commission on Human Rights Report E/CN.4/2006/NGO/174, 2006, p2.

terms are still being implemented with mixed success and frequent setbacks as a result of mutual accusations by both sides. Recent breakthroughs in the negotiations during the last three months include a phone conversation between President Museveni and LRA deputy leader Vincent Otti, a meeting between LRA leader Joseph Kony and UN Undersecretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, and the appointment of Mozambique's former President Joaquim Chissano as UN envoy to help resolve the conflict. However, many obstacles to reach a final agreement still remain, including LRA's request to obtain an amnesty for its senior leaders prosecuted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), demands to obtain enhanced autonomy and economic concessions for the country's north, and integrating the LRA into the Ugandan national army.⁴ Although the ceasefire was extended in December 2006 until 28 February 2007, negotiations stagnated in January 2007 following LRA's complaint about Sudan's mediation role and demand for Kenya and South Africa to be considered as potential venues and new mediators for the peace process.⁵

3. ANALYSIS

Respect for human rights in Uganda has been advanced significantly since the mid-1980s, notably by reducing overt abuses by the army and the police. However, numerous areas continue to attract concern, with the conflict in the northern parts of the country generating continuous reports of abuse by both the Lord's Resistance Army and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), the national army. The situation in northern Uganda is critical, with over 80% of civilians enduring deplorable conditions and constant human rights abuses in IDP camps.⁶ The UN's head of humanitarian affairs, Jan Egeland, described the situation in northern Uganda in 2004 as "the most neglected humanitarian crisis in the world."⁷ The fragility of democratic institutions and the rule of law, the concentration of power under President Museveni, and the various irregularities surrounding the last elections are serious problems affecting Uganda's democratic credentials.

Democratic Institutions

Constitution and Institutions

Uganda has a presidential republic system, with a uni-cameral legislature—the National Assembly—which has 303 members, 86 of whom are nominated by interest groups (army, women, persons with disabilities and trade unions). The army's presence in parliament is incompatible with the democratic principle of separation between state institutions and the armed forces. The president is both the chief of state and head of

⁴ 'Government rejects rebel demand for reconstituted army' (22 August 2006) IRIN News, at <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=55222> (last accessed on 23 August 2006).

⁵ 'Uganda's rebels 'sack' mediator', (17 January 2007), BBC News, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6270255.stm> (Last accessed on 30 January 2007).

⁶ Op. cit.. UN Commission on Human Rights Report March 2006, p4.

⁷ 'Stronger international efforts to stop Uganda's war', (12 November 2004), Afrolnews, at <http://www.afrol.com/articles/14806> (Last accessed on 19 July 2006).

government, with the prime minister playing a supportive, non-executive role. The 1995 constitution increased the separation of powers by giving additional authority to the parliament and the judiciary. For several years, parliament has played a positive role in executive oversight as a result of the greater independence that the no-party system has given to MPs. However, as the restoration of parties grew more likely, parliament's oversight activity diminished as a result of tighter control of the legislature by the executive. The 28 June Parliamentary vote that amended the Constitution allowing Museveni to seek a third term in office is clear evidence of this trend. Freedom House considers that the recent 2006 election cycle in Uganda is a democratic setback, with the re-adoption of multiparty competition being instrumentalized by Museveni to consolidate his power.⁸

Although the state's administrative structures are generally present throughout the country, their operability is much more limited on the periphery, particularly in the north and the northeast as a result of ongoing armed conflicts.⁹

Elections

In the most recent elections, held on 23 February 2006, incoming President Museveni got 59% of the vote versus the 37% share of his main rival, Kizza Besigye, from the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). However, the most important element of the election was the irregularities surrounding the campaign. Observers noted that the conduct of the poll was an improvement over the 2001 vote, but critics accused the government of intimidating the opposition in the run-up, especially through the prolonged detention of Besigye and the harassment, illegal detention and intimidation of his supporters. The main opposition candidate was detained shortly after returning from exile in South Africa in November 2005, and charged in a military court for treason and rape. The arrest led to demonstrations and riots in Kampala and evoked international concern. Although Besigye was granted bail by the High Court on 25 November, he was sent back to prison and faced a military court because of alleged terrorist charges. He was released from prison on bail on 2 January 2006 and cleared of rape charges in March, but still faces accusations of treason. The politically motivated process against him made it nearly impossible for Besigye to mount an effective electoral campaign, an obstacle heightened by the difficulties opposition parties faced in operating outside the capital until the final stage of the campaign period.

Besides the politicized prosecution of Dr. Besigye, the Uganda Human Rights Commission reported allegations of bribery by government officials during the election campaign, especially in rural areas, where cash and other incentives like alcohol were given to influence voting.¹⁰ The opposition also protested irregularities during the voting and the tallying of the votes, claiming that the Electoral Commission had acted illegally

⁸ The Ugandan constitution stipulated the celebration every five years of a referendum to choose between a continuation of the Movement system or a return to a multi-party system. In 2000, Ugandans rejected a return to party politics. In: Freedom House, *Countries at the Crossroads 2006*.

⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, *Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006*.

¹⁰ Uganda Human Rights Commission, *8th Annual Report to Parliament (2005)*

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by declaring results which apparently had not been sent in on the official tally sheets from around the country. Observers from the Commonwealth also expressed concern about names deleted from the electoral register,¹¹ and criticized President Museveni's coercive deployment of 12,000 soldiers across the country ostensibly to protect the polls. Another reported problem was the little information on new polling stations and adequate voting registration available in rural areas.¹² Therefore, like the presidential and parliamentary elections in 1996 and 2001, the 2006 elections have been characterized as not completely free and fair.¹³

Rule of Law

Judiciary

Uganda has a mixed record of respect for the rule of law. On the one hand, the judiciary has proved its commitment to impartiality and its ability to hold the government accountable for many wrongdoings, striking down governmental legislation on fundamental issues, including a ruling in June 2005 that found the mandatory death penalty attached to capital crimes unconstitutional, together with death penalties that were not carried out within three years of sentencing¹⁴.

However, the local NGO Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET) has denounced an increase in attacks on the independence of the judiciary, putting public pressure on judges and even the Chief Justice to rule according to the government's interest. Top army officials have publicly denounced the judiciary for "siding with wrongdoers instead of helping the state", emphasizing that the army cannot be ordered by the courts of law.¹⁵ The Uganda Human Rights Commission has also reported difficulties in investigating complaints as a result of the lack of cooperation from government institutions.¹⁶

Lower levels of the judiciary have demonstrated less effectiveness and independence, particularly in the district courts. Some observers have condemned a considerable degree of discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, and sexual orientation. Lack of means and poor organization of prosecutions lead to another problem: the excessive length of detention prior to trial, which in many cases amounted to several years. The average time in pretrial detention was between two and three years, with pretrial detainees comprising 60% of the prison population and contributing to the overcrowding of Uganda's prisons.¹⁷

¹¹ 'Ugandans relieved at calm poll' (26 February 2006), BBC News at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4753238.stm> (Last accessed on 25 August 2006).

¹² Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

¹³ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

¹⁴ U.S. State Department, *Uganda: Country Report on Human Rights Practices*, March 2006.

¹⁵ Statement by Hurinet-U. (3 February 2006). Available at <http://www.humanrightshouse.org/dllvis5.asp?id=4150>.

¹⁶ Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

¹⁷ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006. Also: Op. cit. Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006.

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The most polemical attack on judicial independence and the rule of law arose following the arrest of opposition leader Kizza Besigye, with security forces taking siege of the High Court during the hearings and the final resort to court-martialing Besigye in a military tribunal. According to Ugandan political commentator Andrew Mwenda, "Besigye's greatest contribution to this country has been to unmask Museveni and expose his true colors as a militarist who disregards the rule of law and shuns due process."¹⁸ Lawyers across Uganda staged a one-day strike on 28 November 2005 in protest at the siege of the High Court. Another relevant judicial process highlighting the government's pressure on the judiciary to carry out political prosecutions is the murder trial against deputy opposition leader Reagan Okumu.

Underfunding of police units also remains an important constraint for implementation of the rule of law. It is estimated that there is only one police officer for every 1,800 civilians, a ratio that in certain areas rises to a 1:5,000 ratio¹⁹.

UPDF and paramilitary groups

The rule of law is problematic in those areas of the country affected by the ongoing struggle between the LRA and the UPDF. UPDF forces engaged in operations against the LRA are frequently accused of violations of human rights that include killings, torture and disappearance of innocent civilians.²⁰ According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UPDF is one of the main sources of insecurity in the refugee camps of northern Uganda, particularly IDP camps in Lallogi, Bobi and Ongako.²¹

The Local Defense Units (LDUs) created by the UPDF to protect villages against the LRA are as feared as the LRA by the locals. In practice, some of these militias have operated against the villagers, as shown by a reported episode in May 2006 in which a refugee camp guard belonging to the Amuka militia shot dead at least 10 IDPs.²² The creation of LDUs to protect IDP camps is also contrary to Principle 13 of the UN Guiding Principles of Internal Displacement, and some of these units have been reported to violate the prohibition to recruit children. The security agencies created outside the institutional framework are also the main operators behind the proliferation of illegal detention facilities known as "safe houses" where torture and the violation of detainees' rights are systematically carried out. Some of these LDU groups included the Joint Anti Terrorism Unit, "Operation Wembley," a.k.a the Violent Crime Crack Unit, the Arrow Boys and the Amuka Boys.²³

¹⁸ 'Museveni: Uganda's fallen angel' (30 November 2005), BBC News at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4482456.stm> (Last accessed 21 August 2006).

¹⁹ Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

²⁰ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

²¹ Op. cit.. UN Commission on Human Rights Report March 2006, p3.

²² 'Uganda refugees killed by guard' (26 May 2006), BBC News, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5009146.stm> (Last accessed on 12 July 2006).

²³ Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

Freedom from arbitrary detention, cruel or inhumane punishment

Ugandan security agencies have been implicated in torture and illegal detentions, particularly of suspected LRA rebels and their sympathizers. Cases of arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention, lengthy pretrial detention and death in custody have been periodically reported.²⁴ Uganda is not yet a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.²⁵

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) found that torture continued to be a widespread practice amongst security organizations in Uganda, with the police force Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI), the Internal Security Organization (ISO) and the Violent Crime Crack Unit (VCCU) being responsible for most abuses. The UHRC reported that one-fifth of the total 1,208 complaints it received in 2005 were torture cases, whose incidence was particularly high in the Moroto region.²⁶ Methods included suspending suspects tied ‘kandoya’—tying hands and feet behind the victim—caning, severe beating and kicking, and attaching electric wires to the male genitals.²⁷ The local Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) has reported that new and more gruesome torture techniques have been introduced in the last years.²⁸ Most torture cases occurred in illegal “safe-houses”, and were intended to force confessions.

Prison conditions remained harsh in Uganda as a result of overcrowded jails (with 19,600 prisoners for 8,229 places), inadequate health care and limited funding. Malnutrition and HIV/AIDS were common features in Ugandan jails. According to the prisons department, 272 inmates died in custody during the year. Following the inspection of 103 local administration prisons in 2005-6, the UHRC concluded that though conditions in local jails still lagged behind those in central government prisons, the treatment of detainees in local prisons had improved²⁹.

The UHRC successfully avoided having its functions transferred to the Inspector General of Government (IGG), which would have ended its independent nature as a watchdog to document these human rights violations.³⁰

Freedom of Thought, Expression and Association

Political Parties

Freedom of political association was fully restored in principle in October 2005, following the July referendum that approved the return to a multi-party system. In practice, the government has limited the activity of political parties by harassing their

²⁴ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

²⁵ UN Commission on Human Rights Report E/CN.4/2006/95 /Add5. 6 March 2006, p294.

²⁶ Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, *State of Pain: Torture in Uganda* (2004).

²⁸ ‘Uganda: Use of torture persists’ (7 May 2006). Accessible at <http://www.afrika.no/Detailed/12484.html> (Last accessed on 24 July 2006).

²⁹ Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

³⁰ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

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leadership and obstructing the work of opposition groups. The most notorious case was the arrest of presidential challenger Kizza Besigye on charges of treason, terrorism and rape, handicapping his presidential campaign. Leaders and supporters of opposing political organizations, such as the FDC, have reportedly been held without trial for more than two years on charges of treason and murder.³¹ In April 2005, two prominent opposition MPs were arrested on what are believed to be politically motivated charges.

In addition, the UHRC has complained that political parties are not able to establish structures at various levels, affecting their ability to function effectively. Some parties were not even able to hold primaries.³² Continued interference with rallies and demonstrations—the most recent on 18 November 2006 and 6 January 2007—further suggests that the government has not accepted its obligation to protect the newly broadened exercise of freedom of association. The state sometimes uses excessive force to prevent or repress public protests, as it did in the days following the arrest of Besigye in November 2005.³³

Freedom of Association and freedom of assembly

Uganda has had a positive record of nurturing a vibrant civil society, but this situation is taking a turn for the worse.³⁴ Although NGOs must register to operate, the government broadly permits international NGOs to visit Uganda to investigate human rights violations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were granted visits to prisons, police stations, and military detention facilities.³⁵ In September 2005, the government expressed its strong disagreement with the findings of a Human Rights Watch report on northern Uganda in a press statement, but did not take stronger action against the NGO.³⁶

Nevertheless, a new NGO bill passed in April 2006 restricts local NGOs' operations and funding, making the annual renewal of operation licenses compulsory. Also, NGO activists have been prosecuted and even imprisoned, like Victor Juliet Mukasa, chairman of Sexual Minorities Uganda.³⁷ In July 2005, human rights activists produced the Entebbe Plan of Action, a document that not only defines strategies to advance human rights in the country, but also condemns the difficulties their organizations confront to carry out their activities. Among others, the government has tried to undermine the independence and work of the UHRC in 2005.³⁸

Some of the restrictions on freedom of assembly, particularly for political groups, were lifted in October 2005, when the multi-party political system was introduced.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

³³ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

³⁶ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

³⁷ UN Commission on Human Rights. Report E/CN.4/2006/95/Add.1. 22 March 2006, p247.

³⁸ Op. cit. UN Commission on Human Rights Report 6 March 2006, p295.

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However, the two-day protests that left at least one dead and dozens arrested in Kampala following the arrest of Dr. Besigye prompted the government to impose a ban on demonstrations ahead of his court case.³⁹ Police denied permission to hold public rallies to several opposition political groups during 2005, blocked public meetings organized by opposition parties and, on several occasions, disrupted or forcibly dispersed opposition meetings.⁴⁰ Groups legally authorized are still required to notify the police of their intended rallies.

Freedom of the Press

The Ugandan government has a moderately positive record of respect for the exercise of a free press. Freedom House has rated Ugandan press as 'partly free'. Critical public discussion is normal, and the media is generally outspoken and offers room for government criticism. Allegations of reported corruption have frequently been investigated by the many private publications and broadcasts.⁴¹

However, the government's involvement in episodes limiting the freedom of information has considerably increased in the last two years, damaging its reputation for media tolerance. In June 2004, six journalists became the first in Uganda's history to be convicted by a military court-martial. More recently, following the arrest of Presidential candidate Besigye, the government banned all public reporting, demonstrations, or discussion of any aspect of the case. At the same time, the police raided *The Monitor* newspaper without a search warrant in order to remove an advertisement for a defense fund for Besigye.⁴² Harassment of the publication continued in November 2005, when the government threatened to close *The Monitor* over a story that President Museveni had offered his brother the top position in the military.

Previously, on 10 August 2005, President Museveni threatened to close any press organization that posed a threat to the country's national security, following the temporary suspension of the popular radio station KFM and the arrest of its talk show host Andrew Mwenda on grounds of sedition. According to the government, KFM had contributed to raising ethnic tensions after it broadcast opinions blaming the government for the helicopter crash that killed Sudanese Vice President John Garang. The leader of a press association, William Rwebembera, publicly criticized the increased intimidation of journalists during the period.⁴³

In addition to recent limitations in press freedom, the state's direct control over the media sector is used to burnish the image of the government. The government continues to operate Radio Uganda and Uganda Television (UTV), whose reporting was not considered to be independent.⁴⁴ It also controls the *New Vision*, the country's most

³⁹ Amnesty International, *Uganda Country Report 2006*.

⁴⁰ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

⁴¹ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006. Also: Op. cit. Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

⁴⁴ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

widely read newspaper, where Museveni recently placed Colonel Noble Mayombo—a former head of military intelligence and one of the President’s most prominent loyalists—as the new chairman of the board.⁴⁵ In the last election, candidate Besigye accused the media of supporting Museveni and undermining the opposition.⁴⁶

In December 2006 the country’s Media Council banned from general sale newspapers containing sexually erotic photographs or cartoons. The new measure could be used as an excuse to limit press freedom, although its real implications remain to be seen⁴⁷.

Minorities, Ethnic conflict and IDPs

Uganda is home to many different ethnic groups, none of whom form a majority of the population. Although ethnic discrimination is forbidden, in practice certain groups in the north (Acholi and Langi), and the Ateso in the East, consider themselves excluded from the central state as a result of economic neglect, lack of genuine political representation and, most importantly, the repressive military actions carried out by the Ugandan military in their fight against the LRA. Large factions of the Baganda, the largest ethnic group, are still demanding a special federal status in recognition of their history as a separate kingdom.⁴⁸

The situation of the Acholi is particularly dramatic, with certain analysts talking in terms of genocide when they refer to the systematic oppression and physical targeting that they suffer at the hands of both the LRA and the UPDF. Ninety-five percent of them currently live in refugee camps.⁴⁹ Less known but equally dramatic are the attacks in Teso against Banyankole herdsmen, the xenophobic struggle between the Banyoro and Bakiga in Kibale, and the conflict created by the so-called “cattle wars” in Karamoja, in Uganda’s North East, where rifles and more efficient weapons have turned the traditional practice of cattle raids in order to pay dowries into a deadly conflict.⁵⁰

Continued ethnic struggle has also created a serious refugee problem. There are over 200,000 Sudanese in the country, together with around 20,000 Rwandans and 15,000 Congolese. However, Kampala’s main challenge is posed by the approximately 1.5 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) originated by the conflict with the LRA, which has organized raids and attacks on refugee camps in the past. The over 100 poorly protected refugee camps existing in Northern Uganda, congested with civilians escaping the brutality of both the LRA and UPDF, face mortality rates tripling those in Darfur, with estimated figures of 1,000 deaths every week.⁵¹ Ugandan refugees have fled the

⁴⁵ Op. cit. ‘Museveni: Uganda's fallen angel’.

⁴⁶ Op. cit. ‘Ugandans relieved at calm poll’.

⁴⁷ ‘Uganda bans “pornographic” papers’ (8 December 2006), BBC News at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6162925.stm> (Last accessed on 19 December 2006).

⁴⁸ Op. cit. Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006.

⁴⁹ Olara Otunnu, ‘Uganda: El Genocidio Secreto,’ Foreign Policy Spanish Edition. Accessible at <http://www.fp-es.org/webextra/uganda.asp>. (Last accessed on 22 August 2006).

⁵⁰ Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005). Also: International Crisis Group, *Beyond Victimhood: Women’s Peacebuilding in Sudan, Congo and Uganda* (28 June 2006), p14

⁵¹ Op. cit. UN Commission on Human Rights Report 6 March 2006, p2.

LRA into southern Sudan and, most recently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, causing political tension with the governments of those countries. Gaps in the government's provision for IDPs, including lack of funding, poor return policies, insufficient protection and scarce consultation with the affected groups, only contribute to worsen the situation.⁵²

Gender, Women's Rights and Children

Violence and prejudice against women continue at high levels, despite governmental efforts to improve their status and combat longstanding cultural and legal discrimination, particularly in marriage. The government has successively postponed parliamentary consideration of a domestic relations bill that would provide protection for married women against marital abuse and other strictures to gender equality.⁵³ Many law enforcement officials also continue to view wife beating as a husband's prerogative and rarely intervene in cases of domestic violence.⁵⁴ Recent legislation approved by parliament did not include the provisions to abolish bride price as recommended by civil society groups.

Many rape cases remained unpunished, particularly those involving members of the military operating in rebel areas of the north, where the incidence of sexual violence is particularly high. For instance, 6 out of every 10 women in the Pabbo camp in Gulu District had been "physically and sexually assaulted."⁵⁵ LRA rebel leaders are also known for abducting young girls and using them as sexual slaves. A Save the Children survey of 1,400 children conducted during 2005 found that 46% of girls were sexually abused and 20% were raped. With no legislation prohibiting it, female genital mutilation was practiced by the Sabiny and Pokot ethnic groups.⁵⁶

Female representation at the political level does not match that of men, but is still higher than in other African countries. For example, while the law allocates 69 parliamentary seats to women in the country's 8th parliament, the number of female MPs elected in the February 2006 elections totaled 89, 28.8 percent of the 309-member parliament. Also, 16 of the 60-member cabinet were women, one woman served as deputy speaker, and another as deputy chief justice of the Supreme Court. Women also headed the Inspectorate General of government and the Criminal Investigation Division of the national police.⁵⁷

Child abuse by extended family, neighbors or teachers remained a common practice. Equally worrying is the effect of military conflict on children. Although the government has agreed to stop it, there are credible reports that children are not only abducted by the

⁵² Op. cit. Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report (2005).

⁵³ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

⁵⁴ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

⁵⁵ Op. cit. Countries at the Crossroads 2006.

⁵⁶ Op. cit. State Department Report 2006.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

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LRA, but also recruited by the LDUs sponsored by the UPDF in the north.⁵⁸ Another dreadful aspect of the conflict is the phenomenon of the approximately 30,000 "night commuters", children who walk many miles each night to urban areas in order to avoid abduction by the LRA. In recent weeks there has been a promising drastic drop in the number of night commuters as a result of progress in the ongoing peace talks.⁵⁹ The Ministry of Education also announced a new program of free education for poor secondary school students in January 2007.⁶⁰

4. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

During the past year, there has been a slight deterioration in legislative power, judicial independence, and freedom of the press in Uganda. At the political level, the return to a multi-party system has been outdone by Museveni's maneuver to abolish presidential term limits and run again for a fifth term in office, which he secured in February 2006. The harassment of opposition parties and leaders, especially Dr. Besigye, and the widespread corruption plaguing the administration (Uganda was ranked 105 out of 163 countries surveyed in the 2006 Transparency International Corruption Perception Index) are also symptoms of Uganda's current democratic deficit. The international community that praised Museveni in the 1990s has increasingly criticized him and even withheld some foreign aid.

At the same time, ongoing negotiations between the government and the leaders of the LRA in Juba (Sudan) could gradually lead to the ending of two decades of cruel conflict. Peace would help improve the critical humanitarian situation in the war-torn northern parts of the country, although negotiations are far from completed and the LRA has repeatedly threatened to walk away. Distrust is high among the parties, and the LRA has most recently complained about the Sudanese mediation, asking South Africa and Kenya to take over from Khartoum as peace brokers. Such a change would definitely delay the achievement of significant progress. In addition, LRA demands of enhanced autonomy for the north, cabinet representation, 20% of all government revenue, and a reduction in the size of the UPDF to 30,000 troops—with 1/3 coming from the LRA—make a settlement seem difficult.⁶¹

In any case, Uganda's problem goes beyond the conflict with the LRA. The UPDF bears a great deal of responsibility for the human rights abuses committed throughout the country. An agreement between the government and LRA is not likely to terminate the

⁵⁸ 'Uganda has agreed to cleanse its army of child soldiers, UN envoy says' (26 June 2006), UN News Center, at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=18996&Cr=uganda&Cr1=> (Last Accessed on 19 July 2006).

⁵⁹ 'Drastic Drop in Child Night Commuter Numbers in Gulu Town' (5 September 2006), The Monitor, at <http://www.monitor.co.ug/news/news09052.php> (Last accessed on 5 September 2006).

⁶⁰ 'Free schooling for needy Ugandans', (5 January 2007), BBC News, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6234607.stm> (Last accessed on 1 February 2007).

⁶¹ 'Government ready for conditional truce with rebels', (25 August 2006), IRIN News, at http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=55279&SelectRegion=East_Africa&SelectCountry=UGANDA (Last accessed on 27 August 2006).

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actions of LDUs and paramilitary groups that engage in multiple human rights violations and enjoy widespread impunity at operating safe-houses. The return of IDPs and the reintegration of LRA fighters into Ugandan society pose an immense challenge for a country with limited means and many ethnic grievances and tensions. As stated by the Ugandan Minister of State for Relief and Disaster, Francis Musa Ecweru, “Post-conflict challenges are going to be heavier than the war itself.”⁶²

In light of the new opportunity for peace in the North, the Ugandan government should carry out a series of in-depth reforms that could both improve democratic rule and the human rights situations in the country. At the political level, the new playing field created by the reintroduction of the multi-party system is an opportunity to engage groups and social segments traditionally marginalized from institutions. In this regard, charges against Dr. Kizza Besigye should be dropped given the absence of credible evidence against him; at a minimum, he should be granted a fair and transparent trial that could lay the foundation for the establishment of a more constructive dialogue between his Forum for Democratic Change and the government. A working relationship with the FDC could be particularly productive for the government in the north, where the FDC enjoys broad support and a potential peace dividend should start delivering better living conditions and state services to the population.⁶³ President Museveni should also publicly commit to stand down from office beyond the 2011 limit of his current presidential term, at which point he will have ruled for 25 years.

The UPDF is a force of potential instability in the country. The Ugandan government must put an end to the human rights abuses committed by the UPDF and the LDUs it supports. This can be achieved by closing safe houses and bringing to justice the perpetrators of torture, illegal detentions, disappearances and killings. Positive legislation that reinforces the role and activity of NGOs and independent media should be introduced to reverse recent attacks on these agents. For instance, Uganda has a well-articulated and organized women’s peace movement that could be highly instrumental in ongoing peace-building efforts in the country, while NGOs could be helpful at dealing with post-conflict reconciliation and facilitating both the return of IDPs and the reintegration of ex combatants into civil life.⁶⁴

Uganda has for decades been a favorite of the international donor community, whose financial aid should be better targeted to abridge the north-south development gap and to drive the aforementioned reforms. The international community should also use its economic leverage more preventively rather than reactively at refraining Museveni from assaulting democratic institutions and practices. Donor support for civic and voter education needs to be improved. There also needs to be more assertive political and humanitarian action with regard to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the north, where

⁶² ‘Daunting post-conflict challenges in the north’ (31 August 2006), IRIN News, at http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=55348&SelectRegion=East_Africa (Last accessed on 1 September 2006).

⁶³ Dr. Kizza Besigye gathering support climbed to 80% of the vote in northern areas like the Gulu District, while Museveni’s main backing comes from the richer, most prosperous west. See: Op. cit. ‘Ugandans relieved at calm poll’.

⁶⁴ Op. cit International Crisis Group, *Beyond Victimhood*.

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NGOs and local agencies should be the main partner, rather than governmental institutions. The donor community could also be more forceful at limiting Museveni's intrusiveness in other countries' affairs, including the Democratic Republic of Congo—where Kampala has ambitions over the mineral-rich east. The dispatch of Ugandan peacekeeping troops to Somalia in early February, as announced by President Museveni in late January 2007, should also be cautiously monitored⁶⁵.

5. STATISTICS AND INDICATORS

World Bank Institute Governance Indicators 2005	Uganda Score	Key
Voice and Accountability	30.9	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak voice and accountability; higher value indicates strong voice and account)
Political Stability and Absence of Violence	10.4	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak political stability and high violence; higher value indicates opposite)
Government Effectiveness	36.8	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak government effectiveness; higher value indicates strong govt. effectiveness)
Regulatory Quality	53	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak regulatory quality; higher value indicates strong regulatory quality)
Rule of Law	30	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak rule of law; higher value indicates strong rule of law)
Control of Corruption	20.2	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates weak control of corruption; higher value indicates strong control of corruption)

Freedom House: Freedom in the World 2007	Uganda Score	Key
Political Rights	5	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of political rights; higher value indicates bad system political rights)
Civil Liberties	4	Range 1-7 (Lower value indicates good system of civil liberties; higher value indicates bad system civil liberties)
Status	PF	3 Categories: F (Free); PF (Partly Free); NF (Not Free) / (*) Indicates electoral system

Freedom House: Freedom of the Press 2006	Uganda Score	Key
Total Score	44PF	Range 0-100 (Lower value indicates total free press; higher value indicates less freedom) / 3 Categories: F (Free); PF (Partly Free); NF (Not Free)

⁶⁵ 'Uganda: Troops to arrive in Somalia in two weeks' (21 January 2007), Mathaba News, at http://www.mathaba.net/0_index.shtml?x=549030 (Last accessed on 1 February 2007).

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Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006	Uganda Score	Key
Stateness	6.5	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development)
Political Participation	5.0	
Rule of Law	6.3	
Stability of democratic Institutions	5.5	
Political and Social Integration	6.0	
Total Score Political Transformation	5.85	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates negative democratic development; higher value indicates positive democratic development) / Arrow shows trend in democratic development (↑Improved; ↓Worsened)
Total Score Political Management	5.55	Range 0-10 (Lower value indicates lower quality of political management; higher value indicates higher quality of political management)

Corruption Perceptions Index 2006	Uganda Score	Key
Total Score	2.7	Range 0-10 (lower value indicates high corruption; higher value indicates lower values of corruption)

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