



# *Joint Media Statement*

*On*

*The International Human  
Rights Day on  
10th December 2014*

*Issued on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014*

Colleagues from partner organisations present,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Members of the Press,

I am very pleased to welcome you all to this special event held to mark the commemoration activities of the International Human Rights Day 2014. The activities are a joint effort of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Human Rights Network (HURINET), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Uganda, African Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), Human Rights Center, Refugee Law Project, Avocats Sans Frontiers (ASF), the Un Wanted Witnesses, and many other human rights organizations and stakeholders.

The theme for this year's International Human Rights Day is '**Human Rights 365**,' which encompasses the idea that every day throughout the year, is a Human Rights Day. The theme also re-echoes the fundamental proposition in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that each one of us, everywhere and at all times is entitled to the enjoyment of the full range of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which was adopted in 1948 by various nations of the world, is a guiding document in the protection and promotion of human rights by those nations. States of the world have therefore established national human rights institutions and

also encouraged the work of civil society organizations to advocate for the respect of human rights in their respective countries. Other human rights agencies at the international and regional level have also been engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights in the world.

UHRC and its partners have therefore this year organized events aimed at taking stock of the human rights situation in this country during the past 365 days; to remind government and the citizens of their human rights obligations; to raise awareness about the principles of human rights among the citizens of Uganda, and to call for re-dedication to the protection and promotion of human rights by government and all Ugandans.

This year's commemoration of the International Human Rights Day has been prompted by the realization of the need to offer a platform for citizens to demand for accountability from duty bearers in the past 365 days in respect of their contribution to human rights protection and promotion. This is being done in recognition of the fact that each one of us, everywhere and at all times is entitled to the full range of human rights; and that every day is a Human Rights Day. This year the commemoration will therefore pay special attention to the rights of juvenile offenders, including the condition of remand homes in this country.

We note that although Uganda has made some progress in creating awareness for human rights, hence empowering the citizens to demand for the various rights from the duty bearers, there still exists limited platforms for citizens to demand for accountability and observance of

basic human rights standards. We further note the limited avenues of bringing to the fore the state and challenges in the national juvenile offenders' facilities in this country, and the limited advocacy for improvement of those areas which require urgent attention.

The joint advocacy activities carried out this year by the Uganda Human Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission, UN Human Rights, Uganda, HURINET, Human Rights Center and other partners based on the above theme, are aimed at creating awareness of the fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in general; creating awareness for the need for duty bearers to recount their contribution in the area of human rights and to provide accountability to the citizens as well as fulfilling the critical need for human rights to be respected every day. All these are being done with special focus on the vulnerable groups in our communities.

The activities lined up for the human rights week which we are launching to the public today will include the press briefing that is happening now; a public dialogue; a Human Rights Information, Education and Communication exhibition and a Theme Night highlighting human rights concerns arising out of land problems in the country and to be crowned by the main event involving a peaceful procession from Kololo Independence Grounds to Naguru Remand Home. Other commemoration activities outside Kampala and spearheaded by the Uganda Human Rights Commission Central Regional Office will include human rights sensitization activities on Buvuma Islands.

The public dialogue to be held at Hotel Africa tomorrow 9<sup>th</sup> December, is aimed at reflecting on the human rights situation in Uganda during the last 365 days, and it will also focus on a review of the general human rights operating environment in the country, media freedoms as well as freedom of expression, assembly and association, the legislative framework, and other issues of concern on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR).

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December, there will be a peaceful procession and inspection of the human rights condition of the facilities at Naguru Remand Home as well as social responsibility activities including painting the buildings in the Remand Home, and offering short counseling and human rights sensitization sessions to the juvenile offenders. These five activities will be the main highlights of the week, and the entire function on that day will be presided over by the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Hon Mary Karooro Okurut. Other officials from government ministries and departments, the Justice, Law and Order Sector, development partners and civil society organisations are expected to attend the function at Naguru Remand Home. The activity will offer an opportunity for the plight of the juvenile offenders to be highlighted and solutions to be mapped out.

The commemoration activities outside Kampala will be concurrently held in Buvuma Islands by the Uganda Human Rights Commission Central Regional Office from Sunday December 7<sup>th</sup> to Saturday December 13<sup>th</sup> 2014. The series of activities to be carried out in the 54 Islands that make up Buvuma District will create a platform for a number of topical human rights issues to be disseminated to the communities in the

islands. Activities to commemorate the International Human Rights Day in Buvuma Islands will cover the ten landing sites of Ndotwe, Kibibi, Kembo, Malija- Bwanika, Magyo, Kyanamu, Lingira, Kirongo, Lufu and Kilembe. Commemoration activities lined up for the Islands will include 10 human rights sensitization meetings on this year's human rights day theme targeting an average of 200 people per meeting. The participants will also be provided with general human rights knowledge as well as duties and responsibilities of citizens; the mandate of UHRC; the Anti-Torture law; the Public Order Management law and the rights of vulnerable persons.

Other commemoration activities at Buvuma Islands will include carrying out mobile complaint clinics by receiving and registering complaints of human rights violations, investigating and following up on the cases already registered and offering advice to islanders on various human rights concerns.

However, as we commemorate this year's International Human Rights Day, we would like to pay more attention to the rights of juvenile offenders or children in contact and in conflict with the law. We therefore make the following urgent calls:

1. Government and other relevant institutions to re-dedicate themselves to paying special attention to the rights of the vulnerable groups including juvenile offenders.
2. The Uganda Law Reform Commission in consultation with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and other relevant partners should expedite the process of amending the

Children's Act in order to provide for the diversion of children from the formal justice system.

3. Government should allocate more resources to cater for the juvenile offenders and the basic needs in the relevant facilities.
4. Government, political leaders, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and the media to step up efforts for concerted advocacy campaigns to draw special attention to human rights accountability, especially in respect of the plight of the vulnerable groups in Uganda.
5. UHRC and other institutions concerned should provide massive civic awareness campaigns to empower citizens with knowledge of their fundamental human rights and the corresponding duties and obligations.

We believe that joint advocacy activities of this nature to commemorate the International Human Rights Day will take advantage of the critical mass of people participating in the activities, and provide a great advocacy tool for the improvement of the human rights situation in Uganda, which for UHRC and its partners is a continuous process and from which we shall never tire.

On behalf of the partners that have organized these joint commemoration activities, I therefore end by inviting members of the press to show more vigilance in highlighting the theme of this year, the various activities lined up for commemoration of the day and most especially, highlight the plight of juvenile offenders and all vulnerable groups by actively participating and according informative coverage of the activities commencing tomorrow with the public dialogue and

exhibition at Hotel Africana, and the main event at Naguru Remand Home on Wednesday December 10<sup>th</sup> 2014. I also urge the media to highlight the issues concerning accountability and Justice for juvenile offenders throughout the coming year.

I also wish you a free, open, participatory and fruitful human rights event as we join the rest of the world in commemorating this year's International Human Rights Day.

For God and My Country

Dr. Katebalirwe Amooti Wa Irumba  
Member of the Commission  
Acting Chairperson, Uganda Human Rights Commission

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