

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

IN THE HIGH COURT OF UGANDA AT KAMPALA
CIVIL DIVISION

MISCELLANEOUS CAUSE NO:²⁵⁶.....OF 2016

UNWANTED WITNESS - UGANDA.....

VERSUS

1. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF UGANDA
2. UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
3. MTN (U) LTD.
4. AIRTEL (U) LTD.
5. SMILE COMMUNICATIONS (U) LTD.
6. VODAFONE (U) LTD.
7. AFRICELL (U) LTD
8. SMART TELECOM (U) LTD.
9. UGANDA TELECOM (UTL) (U) LTD.
10. K2 TELECOM (U) LTD.



.....RESPONDENTS

NOTICE OF MOTION

[An application to seek declarations against the violation of the right to freedom of speech and expression; the right to work; and the right to livelihood and an adequate standard of living Under Articles: 20 (2), 29 (1), 40 (2), 45 & 50 of the Constitution of Uganda; Articles: 6 (d), 7 (2) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (as amended, 2006 & 2007); Article: 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981); Articles 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Articles: 19 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and article 6, 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)]

TAKE NOTICE that this Honourable Court will be moved on the.....^{3rd}.....day of.....^{FEB}.....2016 at.....^{9:30}.....O'clock in the forenoon/afternoon or thereafter, as Counsel for the applicant shall be heard on an application for declarations and orders that:

- a) The shutting down of social media by the Respondents during the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections in February 2016 violated the rights of Ugandan citizens and residents to the freedom of speech and expression which is guaranteed under article 29 (1) (a) of the Constitution of Uganda; article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; article 19(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- b) The blocking and shutting down by the 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 9th Respondents of mobile money transfer services during the general elections in February 2016 violated the rights of Ugandan citizens and residents to work and to livelihood, which are guaranteed under article 20 (2), 40 (2), 45 of the Constitution of Uganda; article 14 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; articles 6, 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and articles 23, 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- c) The shutting down of social media by the Respondents on 11th – 12th May 2016, violated the right of Ugandan citizens and residents to the freedom of speech and expression which is guaranteed under article 29 (1) (a) of the Constitution of Uganda; article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; article 19 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- d) A Permanent injunction does issue against the Respondents.
- e) Costs of this Cause be paid by the Respondents.

THE GROUNDS for this application are set out in the affidavit deposed to, by **Geoffrey Wokulira Ssebagala**, which shall be relied upon at the hearing hereof, but briefly are that:

1. Sometime in the second half of 2015, the Electoral Commission announced officially that there would be presidential, parliamentary and local council elections on 18th February 2016 in compliance with the Constitution of Uganda.

2. On or around 17th of February 2016 Social Media was blocked or shut down across the country and kept Twitter, Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, You Tube and other online platforms inaccessible for at least four days.
3. The blackout adversely affected the ability of people to communicate, socialize, remain informed, keep abreast with, and address through social media, various affairs of both private significance and public importance.
4. At around the same time, financial transactions through mobile money transfers were blocked across the country, which affected the livelihoods of those who depended on it as a business; and those who needed the system to make financial transfers for various purposes.
5. On or around 11th – 12th May 2016 internet users in Uganda experienced another internet outage affecting Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, You Tube, Viber and other internet platforms, which again affected the ability of people to communicate, socialize and remain educated about a range of critical and non-critical, private and public matters.

DATED at Kampala this.....28.....day of.....9.....2016

.....
Counsel for the Applicant

GIVEN under my hand and seal of this Honourable Court
this.....2nd.....day ofNov.....2016

.....
Registrar

Drawn & Filed by:

**M/s Rwakafuuzi & Co. Advocates
Plot 8-10 Kampala Road
Apartment 14 Uganda House
P.O. Box 26003 Kampala
Tel: +256414258136
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THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

IN THE HIGH COURT OF UGANDA AT KAMPALA
(CIVIL DIVISION)

MISCELLANEOUS CAUSE NO:256.....OF 2016

UNWANTED WITNESS - UGANDA..... APPLICANT

VERSUS

1. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF UGANDA
2. UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
3. MTN (U) LTD.
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AFFIDAVIT OF SUPPORT OF NOTICE OF MOTION

I, **GEOFFREY WOKULIRA SSEBAGGALA** of C/o M/s Rwakafuuzi & Co. Advocates, Plot 8-10 Kampala Road, Apartment 14 Uganda House, P.O. Box 26003 Kampala, Tel: +256 414 258136; email; kalr@utlonline.co.ug do solemnly make oath and state that:

1. I am a male adult Ugandan of sound mind and the Chief Executive Officer of Unwanted Witness-Uganda, a non-governmental organization, duly registered under Ugandan laws to promote the right to freedom of expression through various online platforms.

2. On or about 17th February 2016 members of the general population experienced a shutdown of Social Media and Mobile Money services in Uganda, which lasted for four days.

3. The Social Media blackout was widely reported in both the international and local media. (See Annexures collectively marked "Shutdown I").

4; The blackout was also condemned by both local and international human rights organisations and agencies who issued statements. (See attached annexures collectively marked "Condemnations").

5. The 3rd and 4th Respondents sent out short messages (sms) to subscribers to notify them that the 2nd Respondent had ordered, directed or instructed them to block the service due to a threat to public order & safety. (See attached annexure marked "Notification").

6. On 18th February 2016, President/Candidate Yoweri Museveni addressed journalists where he confirmed and justified the blocking of the internet for the reasons that steps had to be taken for security to stop so many social media users from getting in trouble for using these platforms to tell lies. (See attached video annexure marked "M7").

7. For two days or thereabout starting 11th May 2016 internet users experienced another Social Media shutdown that was ordered by the 2nd Respondent in anticipation of the inauguration ceremony of the President-Elect, which took place on 12th May 2016. (See attached reports of the 2nd social media shutdown marked "Shutdown II").

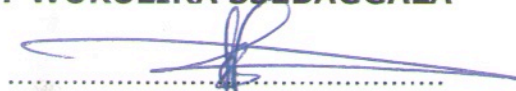
8. Fresh notifications by the 3rd – 10th Respondents were sent out to their customers stating that the defendants were acting on the directives of the 2nd Respondent.

9. I swear this affidavit in support of the application.


What I have stated is true to the best of my knowledge, belief and or information, as herein above applicable.

SWORN September at Kampala this 28th day of September 2016

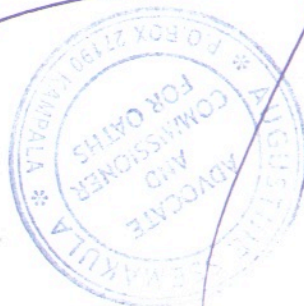
By the said **GEOFFREY WOKULIRA SSEBAGGALA**


.....
Deponent

Before me,


.....
Commissioner for Oaths

Drawn & Filed by:
M/s Rwakafuuzi & Co. Advocates
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P.O. Box 26003 Kampala
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"Shutdown I"

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35601220>

Uganda election: Facebook and Whatsapp blocked

BBC NEWS - 18 February 2016

- From the section [Africa](#)



Social media has been blocked in Uganda on the day of presidential elections to stop people "telling lies", President Yoweri Museveni has said.

Mr Museveni, 71, is seeking to extend his 30-year rule, in a race widely seen as the tightest in the East African state's history.

His main rival Kizza Besigye was briefly detained by police.

A foreign observer group condemned the blockage of social media and lengthy delays in opening voting booths.

Interviewed on TV about social media, Mr Museveni said: "Some people misuse those pathways. You know how they misuse them - telling lies.

"If you want a right then use it properly."

Many people found a way around the controversial restrictions, including opposition candidate Amama Mbabazi who tweeted advice on how to do it:



Amama Mbabazi
@AmamaMbabazi



Follow

Good morning. I hope voting is going well at your polling station? To access Twitter, Whatsapp and Facebook use Tunnelbear VPN.

RETWEETS
141

LIKES
73



8:41 AM - 18 Feb 2016



Image copyright Twitter

A VPN - a Virtual Private Network - gets round government censorship by redirecting your internet activity to a computer in a different country.

Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and mobile money services were blocked.

Despite this, #UgandaDecides was trending on Twitter.

Commonwealth election observer mission head Olusegun Obasanjo said: "It is ill advised if anyone has blocked social media."

Condemning the failure of voting stations to open on time, he said: "Delays of three, four, five and even six hours, especially in Kampala, are absolutely inexcusable and will not inspire trust and confidence in the system and the process".

The electoral commission said difficulties in transporting electoral materials caused the delays, and voting at some polling stations would continue on Friday.

The BBC's Catherine Byaruhanga in the capital, Kampala, reports that crowds were angry after waiting several hours to vote and police fired tear gas to disperse them.

Voting was cancelled at at least two polling stations in the city after clashes with police and accusations of fake ballots being distributed.

Some voters in Kampala, traditionally an opposition stronghold, accused the authorities of deliberately stalling the vote, AFP news agency reports.

"People are quite angry and everybody is believing that there is something wrong behind this because of the way they are delaying things," Moses Omony, a motorbike taxi driver, is quoted as saying.

Mr Besigye was arrested for demanding access to a house in Kampala where he believed vote rigging was taking place following the closure of polling stations, said Ssemujju Ibrahim Nganda, spokesman for his FDC party.

He was taken to a police station before being released.

Mr Besigye is among seven opposition candidates hoping to end Mr Museveni's 30-year rule.

A candidate needs to secure more than 50% of the vote to avoid a run-off with the second-ranked contender.

Ugandans also voted in parliamentary elections.

Counting is under way and official results are expected by Saturday.

Major presidential contenders:



- Kizza Besigye, 59, veteran opposition leader and once personal doctor to incumbent President Museveni. He has lost the last three elections
- Amama Mbabazi, 67, former ally of President Museveni and once prime minister and also served as defence, security and justice ministers
- Yoweri Museveni, 71, in power since winning a five-year guerrilla war in 1986 and he is one of Africa's longest-serving leaders. His final term was meant to end in 2006, but in 2005 he won a campaign to lift the constitutional term limits.

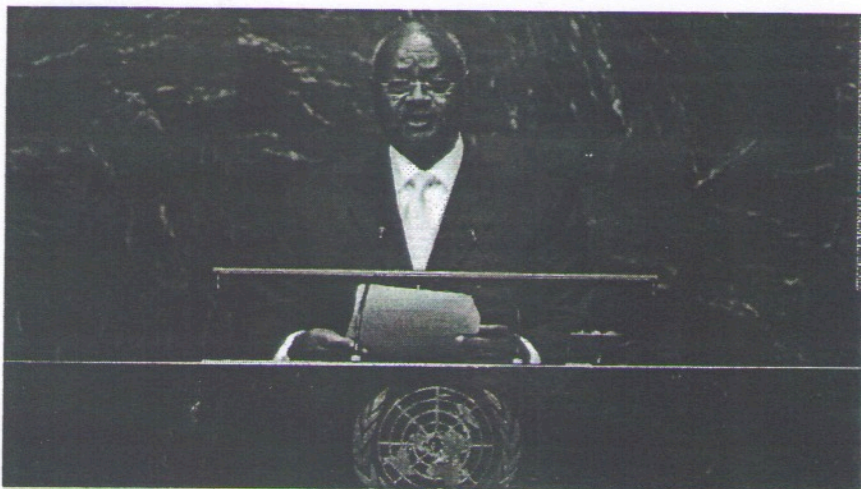
"Shutdown I"

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/18/world/uganda-election-social-media-shutdown/>

Uganda shuts down social media; candidates arrested on election day

By Briana Duggan, CNN

Updated 0622 GMT (1422 HKT) February 19, 2016



Yoweri Museveni, seen speaking at the U.N. in 2014, has been president of Uganda since 1986.

Story highlights

- Authorities say a leading opposition leader, Kampala's mayor and a ruling party candidate are arrested
- President Yoweri Museveni says social media shutdown is "to avert lies ... intended to incite violence"
- Museveni is running for a fifth term, and has been president for 30 years

(CNN) Tensions mounted as votes in Uganda are counted in an election that saw the detention of the leading opposition candidate, a ban on social media and allegations of voter fraud.

Ugandans voted on Thursday on the fate of President Yoweri Museveni, who is hoping for a fifth term after ruling the nation for the last 30 years.

The day began with many politically-minded voters unable to tweet or update their Facebook pages after a government ban on social media.

After casting his vote at his home in western Uganda, Museveni defended the ban as a "security measure to avert lies ... intended to incite violence and illegal declaration of election results."

Human rights groups condemned the social media clampdown. Many citizens accessed social media sites via encrypted private networks. A similar shutdown occurred during the 2011 general election.

"The Ugandan government's decision to block access to social media on mobile phones on election day is a blatant violation of Ugandans' fundamental rights to freedom of expression and to seek and receive information," said Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International's deputy regional director. "Without clearly defined security concerns, this closure is nothing but an exercise in censorship as Ugandans elect their leaders."

Opposition candidate briefly held

Throughout the election, social media has been used as a rallying and debate tool.

In January, Ugandans used [the hashtag #1986pictures](#) with tweets of 30-year-old pictures and remarks like "In 30 years, everything has changed in Uganda except the president."

Further complicating the vote, opposition candidate Kizza Besigye was detained in the area of Kasangati near the capital, Kampala, on Thursday, local police told CNN.

Besigye, who was released after about three hours, was detained after attempting to enter a call center he suspected was being used to store illegal election materials, Kampala police spokesman Patrick Onyango said.

Accompanied by journalists and members of a European Union observer mission, Besigye arrived at the secure police facility and demanded to be let in, Onyango said. Besigye has been arrested on numerous occasions in his bid for the presidency.

The mayor of Kampala, Erias Lukwago, was arrested in his home in the area of Rubaga, police said. The reason for the arrest is unclear.

The start of the election was delayed in some polling stations because of what the electoral commission said was a shortage of election materials. The Commonwealth observer mission's leader, former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, called the delays "inexcusable."

Polls closed at 6 a.m. ET, with results expected Friday.

Uganda's Electoral Commission reported that a candidate of the ruling National Resistance Movement was arrested for ballot stuffing in the Busiro South constituency south of Kampala. The ballots stuffed in various boxes had votes for him and Museveni, the commission reported.

In the lead-up to the election, rights groups have warned that freedom of association and expression have been under threat.

"Uganda has seen increased levels of authoritarianism in the last decade," said Magnus Taylor, Horn of Africa analyst at International Crisis Group. "This has come in waves, most evident during election

period when a generally strident opposition has clashed against the president's anti-democratic tendencies."

Few expect new leader to emerge

A crowd at one polling station in Kampala surged at a man they say had marked ballots in favor of Museveni. Police and military used tear gas and live bullets to disperse the crowd.

Onyango said nine people were injured and 20 arrested.

Now 71, Museveni has been in power since 1986. In 2005, the constitution was changed to allow him to extend presidential term limits.

Few observers expect Museveni to lose. Taylor of the International Crisis Group said a victory signals an ominous trend.

"A re-election for Museveni would signal the persistent advantages incumbents have in controlling the political process, making it very difficult for opposition parties or candidates to compete with national structures, finance and support from partisan government institutions," he said.

"It would be ... 'business as usual' for Uganda and Africa in general, where the value of incumbency is frequently in evidence."

Leaders across Africa have been criticized for extending their term limits to stay in power. Rwanda amended its constitution to allow the leader to potentially rule until 2034. In Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza's June decision to amend the constitution in order to run for a third term ignited unrest, resulting in more than 300 deaths.

CNN's Samson Ntale and Robyn Kriel contributed to this report.

'Shutdown I'

The East African

Uganda shutdown of social media proves futile as users bypass ISPs

By GAAKI KIGAMBO

Posted Sunday, February 21 2016 at 13:14

In Summary

- Attempts by the Ugandan government to shut down popular social media sites Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, especially on mobile devices, appear to have come to naught as users resorted to virtual private networks (VPNs) to bypass the blockade to exchange information on voting, tallying and announcement of results.
- The aim of the social media shutdown, according to the Uganda Communication Commission, which instructed Internet service providers to block social media sites, was to safeguard the country's "security."

Attempts by the Ugandan government to shut down popular social media sites Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, especially on mobile devices, appear to have come to naught as users resorted to virtual private networks (VPNs) to bypass the blockade to exchange information on voting, tallying and announcement of results.

VPNs are virtual versions of secure networks designed to provide a secure, encrypted tunnel in which to transmit data over parallel systems aimed to block it.

The aim of the social media shutdown, according to the Uganda Communication Commission, which instructed Internet service providers to block social media sites, was to safeguard the country's "security."

READ: Uganda blocks social media platforms, Museveni explains why -VIDEO
But political observers say it was aimed at limiting media scrutiny of the election and signalled the return of a clampdown on civil liberties such as freedom of association, speech and assembly and further gagging of the media, which was common in the run-up to earlier elections.

"Switching off social media is seen as a deliberate move orchestrated by the government to stifle voices of dissent, hide a flawed electoral process and deny Ugandans the right to know what is actually happening," said Lucy Anyango Ekadu, the president of the Uganda Journalists Union, in a statement.

The social media blockade came hot on the heels of a warning by UCC that it would not hesitate to shut down news platforms that do not comply with "minimum broadcasting standards."

Systematic clampdown

“It is systematic clampdown,” said Peter Gwayaka Magelah, a programme manager at Chapter Four Uganda, a human-rights organisation that released a report on Monday detailing 72 incidents on violations of freedom of assembly and expression ahead of the poll.

“It is part of the continued violation of freedom of expression and gagging of the media that was common in the run-up to elections. It began with attempts to block critical debate on radio, then NTV was blocked from President Yoweri Museveni’s campaign and more recently, the electoral commission’s blockade of phones and cameras at polling stations. It most likely is a move to block sharing of evidence of rigging,” added Mr Gwayaka.

<http://www.theeastaffrican.co.ke/news/Uganda-social-media-shutdown-proves-futile/2558-3086688-qki8pr/index.html>

"Shutdown I"

UCC shutdown of social media backfires

The Electoral Commission (EC) has relaxed its stance and allowed Opposition political parties to set up parallel tally centres for the February 18 general election

Daily Monitor – Friday February 19 2016



In Summary

Failed. Several internet users managed to bypass the blockade by using the virtual private network (VPN) to continue accessing social media sites.

By By FREDERIC MUSISI

Kampala.

"No weapons fashioned against #tweetizens shall prosper" one tweep [Twitter user] said. The tweet was to mean that even after the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) had succeeded with the shutdown of social media platforms Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter on polling day, all hopes had not been crashed, for example, the hashtag #UgandaDecides remained top among the trending topics on Twitter.

Several Internet users using mobile broadband on devices such as phones and Ipads managed to bypass the blockade by using the virtual private network (VPN) to continue accessing social media sites.

UCC officials, the director of corporate affairs Fred Otunu told this newspaper the "temporary" shutdown of social media and the widely used Mobile Money network was for security concerns while executive director Godfrey Mutabazi told local TV stations the shutdown was at the behest of the Electoral Commission.

However, sources within UCC intimated the Thursday morning shutdown came after the ruling NRM party made an alarm over a spate of negative messages, audio and video, against their candidate President Museveni.

The tampering with social media comes on the heels of a recent crackdown on radios across the country that hosted Opposition presidential candidates.

Attempts to get comment from the NRM party's spokespersons were futile by press time. But President Museveni yesterday after casting his ballot at Kaaro polling station in Rushere, Kiruhura District, told journalists that social media is a "pathway of lies" and justified the shutdown for national security reasons.

"That must be steps taken for security to stop so many [social media users from] getting in trouble," Mr Museveni said.

UCC, the communications regulator in the country, eventually effected the shutdown around 9am through the mobile telecommunications service providers MTN, Airtel, Smile and Africel. Only Vodafone's connectivity remained functional but intermittent. With VPN access, which enables virtual rerouting of internet protocols, Twitter and Facebook were abuzz with minute by minute updates of what was happening round the country as Ugandans cast their ballots.

The shutdown was reminiscent of 2011, at the height of the walk-to-work protests, when UCC asked telecommunication companies to shutdown social media for about 24 hours.

Several social platforms are only accessible by smartphones. There is no official statistics of smartphone users in the country but UCC as of last February put mobile phone users in the country at 19.5 million people. Uganda is rated as Not Free in Freedom in the World 2016 index, and partly Free in the Freedom on the Net 2015, according to Freedom House, an independent watchdog.

After the public fury, MTN in the afternoon sent out a Twitter message saying: "The UCC has directed MTN to disable all social media & Mobile Money services due to a threat to Public Order & Safety." Other telecommunications could not be reached immediately for a comment.

THE BACKGROUND

Rights body, Amnesty International in a statement described the shutdown of social media, especially on polling day as a "blatant violation of Ugandans' fundamental rights to freedom of expression and to seek and receive information." In a statement, Amnesty's deputy regional director for East Africa, Sarah Jackson, said "Without clearly defined security concerns, this closure is nothing but an exercise in censorship as Ugandans elect their leaders.

musisif@ug.nationmedia.com

Comments



Francis • [7 months ago](#)

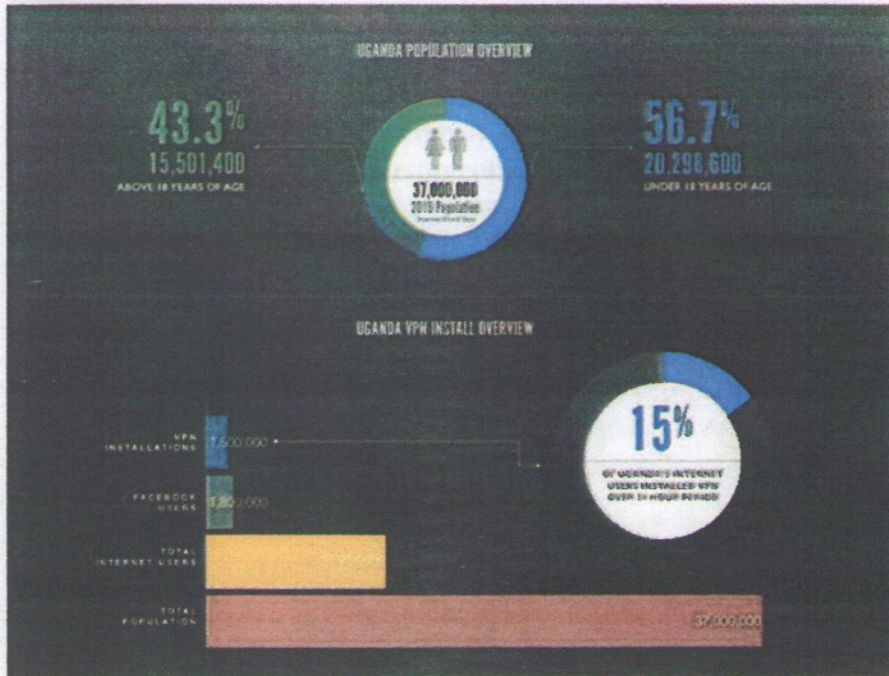
"Shutdown I"

Future of the Internet

Ugandans Turn to Proxies, VPN in Face of Social Media Shutdown

February 19, 2016

3 min read



Written by [CIPESA Uganda](#)

(This was originally published by Web We Want Member [CIPESA](#), our partner in Uganda, under a Creative Commons license)

On the morning of the highly anticipated general elections in Uganda, citizens woke up to no access to social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp. The popular mobile phone-based financial transaction service commonly known as Mobile Money was also offline.

Tech-savvy Ugandans keen to keep information on the electioneering process flowing turned to [sharing information](#) on proxies and apps that enable circumventing the blockage through Virtual Private Networks (VPN).

Within hours, as more and more citizens got back online, there was a spike in social media activity. By 1pm local time, the hashtag #UgandaDecides recorded [35,000](#) tweets. Three hours later at 4pm, the number of tweets with this hashtag had jumped to 56,000. By 5pm, the hashtag boasted over [64,000](#) tweets. As at 7pm, the figure stood at [over double](#) that of 1pm and was still growing.

Incumbent President Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, is standing in the current elections and faces perhaps the strongest electoral challenge ever to his three-decade rule. Ugandan citizens' level of online civic engagement was sparked by the first ever televised presidential debates, the first of which was held in January and the second just last week. During both debates, #UgandaDecides alongside #UGDebate16 trended, raising some level of trust in the electioneering process.

But this trust seems to have been turned on its head today. Internet services in various areas of the country have been intermittent, leaving many unable to access information. Leading telecommunications service provider MTN issued a statement confirming that Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the regulator, had "directed MTN to disable all social media and mobile money services due to a threat to public order and safety." There has been no communication from any of the other service providers including Vodafone, which has championed disclosure of government requests for user information and surveillance support through its annual Transparency reports.

An official at the communications regulator confirmed to the local Daily Monitor newspaper that they directed ISPs to block access to social media sites over "national security" concerns related to the "sensitive" elections period.

As the day progressed, growing numbers of citizens were able to share updates on late arrivals of voting materials at various stations, reports of election malpractice, and provisional election results.

Previous election periods in Uganda have seen a crackdown on social media, voices critical of the ruling party, and independent media in the guise of promoting public order and unity as well as preventing the spread of false information. The 2011 elections were marked with filtering of short message services (SMS) which contained certain words.

Current blockage is for an indeterminate period.

See also State of Internet Freedom in Uganda reports 2014 and 2015.

Uganda UgandaDecides

<https://webwewant.org/news/ugandas-circumventing-censorship-during-ugandadecides/>

Shutdown I

Unwanted Witness Amplifying Voices and Changing Lives

13 May

Uganda has launched a total social media blackout: Ugandans on VPN

[Comments Off](#)

Posted in [Global Right on Internet](#) and tagged [#Keepiton](#), [2nd Social media Shutdown](#), [Keep it on](#), [Quartz Africa](#), [quartz magazine](#), [Ugandans on VPN](#).

Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni was sworn in today (May 12) for his fifth term amid military jets, [congratulatory African leaders](#), and his coterie of supporters. One thing that wasn't present was the flow of comments and photos on social media during the inauguration.

Starting yesterday (May 11), the country's communication regulator ordered internet service providers to block access to Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, according to journalists and digital watchdog nonprofits in the country. This is the second time in less than three months that the government has censored the platforms.

Confirmed: Social media blocked in Uganda around President's swearing in ceremony by [@UCC_Official #KeepitOnpic.twitter.com/W8GpZW3Do6](#)

— Access Now (@accessnow) [May 11, 2016](#)

Much of the debate and discontent over Museveni's continued hold on power—he's already been in office for three decades—is taking place on social media. During the election in February, authorities [blocked all access](#) to social media for three days, citing security concerns. (Ugandans still [got around the ban](#) by downloading VPN software.)

"The government knows that Museveni was not rightly elected by the majority of citizens... thus, it fears that citizens might organize online and cause an uprising [like] the Arab-spring," said Jeff Wokulira Ssebagala, chief executive of Unwanted Witness, a Ugandan nonprofit that advocates for freedom of speech.

The focus on social platforms marks a new dimension to the Ugandan government's [restrictive attempts](#) to manage the media. Earlier this month, authorities banned media outlets [from reporting live](#) on any activities by the opposition party, the Forum for

Democracy Change, led by Dr. Kizza Besigye. More than a dozen journalists have been arrested or beaten this year.

Social media, which is how many Ugandans receive and disseminate news and opinions, could be a much more powerful tool for the government to control the national narrative. There have been early signs of this: In Uganda's 2011 election, which followed the Arab Spring, the government banned the words "Egypt" "dictator," "teargas," and "people power" in text messages.

<https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/uganda-has-launched-a-total-social-media-blackout-ugandans-on-vpn/>

"Shutdown I"

Unwanted Witness

Amplifying Voices and Changing Lives



All Social Media apps like in the picture were all disabled while using the Mobile Data Connection.

UW news brief; Government bows down to pressure, unblocks the social media platforms

[Comments Off](#)

[Posted in News Alerts.](#)

Kampala, 22nd/Feb/2016; five days with no access to social media platforms, Ugandan government has bowed down to global pressure and unclog platforms and mobile phone services.

On 17th Feb 2016, the communication regulator Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) allegedly ordered all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block social media platforms largely accessed and used by majority Ugandans including Facebook, Twitter and WatsApp and mobile money, on grounds that they were threatening the national security during the presidential and parliamentary elections which were held on 18th Feb 2016.

The action of blocking social media platforms attracted wide criticism from local and international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and foreign governments including the United States that demanded for unconditional clearing of social platforms.

Since Internet based platforms are among a few available independent dashboards for decent debates and free speech, some Ugandans resorted to use of proxies to access and use them.

The Unwanted Witness feels that the actions of government clearly indicate that the increasing use of Internet based platforms threaten the current regime as they give citizens more opportunities of increased participation in governance, access to information and promote freedoms of expression, opinion and free speech.

Uganda has more than seven (7) million people accessing Internet everyday with about 17% growth per annum.

<https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/uw-news-brief-government-bows-down-to-pressure-unblocks-the-social-media-platforms/>

Condemnation's"

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Quote

18 February 2016

Uganda social media closure

"The Ugandan government's decision to block access to social media on mobile phones on election day is a blatant violation of Ugandans' fundamental rights to freedom of expression and to seek and receive information," said Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes.

"Without clearly defined security concerns, this closure is nothing but an exercise in censorship as Ugandans elect their leaders."

Background

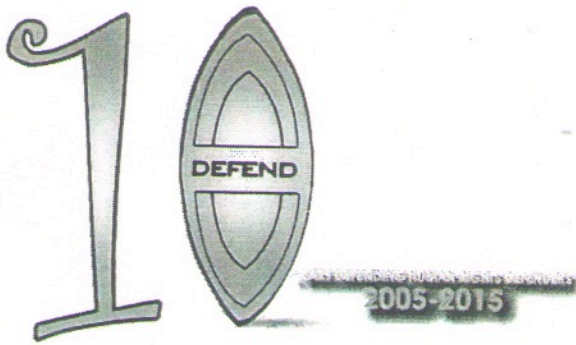
The executive director of the Uganda Communications Commission has confirmed that social networking internet sites have been switched off for national security reasons.

Ugandans are voting in a presidential election where President Yoweri Museveni is seeking to extend his 30-year rule by another five years. They are also holding parliamentary and local elections.



• "Condemnations" •

<https://www.defenddefenders.org/2016/02/3606/>



UGANDA: Joint letter on internet shutdown during election period

February 26, 2016

Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, Mr. David Kaye, Mr. Joseph Cannataci, Mr. Maina Kiai, Mr. Michel Forst, Ms. Faith Pansy Tlakula, and Ms. Reine Alapini-Gansou

cc: African Union
African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Secretariat
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Secretariat
Domestic & International Election Observer Missions to the Republic of Uganda
East African Community Secretariat
International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Secretariat
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat
Uganda Communications Commission
Uganda Electoral Commission
Uganda Ministry of Information and Communications Technology

23 February 2016

Re: Internet shutdown in Uganda and elections

Your Excellencies,

We are writing to urgently request your immediate action to condemn the internet shutdown in Uganda, and to prevent any systematic or targeted attacks on democracy and freedom of expression in other African nations during forthcoming elections in 2016. [1]

On February 18, Ugandan internet users detected an internet outage affecting Twitter, Facebook, and other communications platforms. [2] According to the Uganda Communications

Commission (UCC), blocking was carried out on orders of the Electoral Commission, for security reasons. [3] The shutdown coincided with voting for the presidential election, and remained in place until the afternoon of Sunday, February 21. During this period, two presidential candidates were detained under house arrest. [4] The telco MTN Uganda confirmed the UCC directed it to block "Social Media and Mobile Money services due to a threat to Public Order & Safety." [5] The blocking order also affected the telcos Airtel, Smile, Vodafone, and Africel. President Museveni admitted to journalists on February 18 that he had ordered the block because "steps must be taken for security to stop so many (social media users from) getting in trouble; it is temporary because some people use those pathways for telling lies." [6]

Research shows that internet shutdowns and state violence go hand in hand. [7] Shutdowns disrupt the free flow of information and create a cover of darkness that allows state repression to occur without scrutiny. Worryingly, Uganda has joined an alarming global trend of government-mandated shutdowns during elections, a practice that many African Union member governments have recently adopted, including: Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo. [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]

Internet shutdowns — with governments ordering the suspension or throttling of entire networks, often during elections or public protests — must never be allowed to become the new normal. Justified for public safety purposes, shutdowns instead cut off access to vital information, e-financing, and emergency services, plunging whole societies into fear and destabilizing the internet's power to support small business livelihoods and drive economic development.

Uganda's shutdown occurred as more than 25 African Union member countries are preparing to conduct presidential, local, general or parliamentary elections. [15]

A growing body of jurisprudence declares shutdowns to violate international law. In 2015, various experts from the United Nations (UN) Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Organization of American States (OAS), and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), issued an historic statement declaring that internet "kill switches" can never be justified under international human rights law, even in times of conflict. [16] General Comment 34 of the UN Human Rights Committee, the official interpreter of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, emphasizes that restrictions on speech online must be strictly necessary and proportionate to achieve a legitimate purpose. Shutdowns disproportionately impact all users, and unnecessarily restrict access to information and emergency services communications during crucial moments.

The internet has enabled significant advances in health, education, and creativity, and it is now essential to fully realize human rights including participation in elections and access to information.

We humbly request that you use the vital positions of your good offices to:

- call upon the Ugandan government to provide redress to victims of the internet shutdown, and pledge not to issue similar orders in the future;

- call on African states to uphold their human rights obligations, and not to take disproportionate responses like issuing shutdown orders, especially during sensitive moments like elections;
- investigate shutdowns, in their various forms, in order to produce public reports that examine this alarming trend and its impact on human rights, and make recommendations to governments and companies on how to prevent future disruptions;
- encourage telecommunications and internet services providers to respect human rights and resist unlawful orders to violate user rights, including through public disclosures and transparency reports;
- encourage the African Commission on People's and Human Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the UN General Assembly to resolve that Internet Shutdowns violate freedom of expression per se and without legal justification.

We are happy to assist you in any of these matters.

Sincerely,

Access Now

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)

Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Article 19 East Africa

Chapter Four Uganda

CIPESA

CIVICUS

Committee to Protect Journalists

DefendDefenders (The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)

Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF)

Global Partners Digital

Hivos East Africa

ifreedom Uganda

Index on Censorship

Integrating Livelihoods thru Communication Information Technology (ILICIT Africa)

International Commission of Jurists Kenya

ISOC Uganda

KICTANet (Kenya ICT Action Network)

Media Rights Agenda

Paradigm Initiative Nigeria

The African Media Initiative (AMI)

Unwanted Witness

Web We Want Foundation

Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)

Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum

- [1] Uganda election: Facebook and Whatsapp blocked' (BBC, 18 February 2016) <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35601220>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [2] Omar Mohammed, 'Twitter and Facebook are blocked in Uganda as the country goes to the polls' (Quartz Africa, 18 February 2016) <<http://qz.com/619188/ugandan-citizens-say-twitter-and-facebook-have-been-blocked-as-the-election-gets-underway/>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [3] Uganda blocks social media for 'security reasons', polls delayed over late voting material delivery (The Star, 18 February 2016) <<http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2016/02/18/uganda-blocks-social-media-for-security-reasons-polls-delayed-over-c1297431>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [4] Brian Duggan, "Uganda shuts down social media; candidates arrested on election day" (CNN, 18 February 2016) <<http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/18/world/uganda-election-social-media-shutdown/>> accessed 22 February 2016.
- [5] MTN Uganda <<https://twitter.com/mtnug/status/700286134262353920>> accessed 22 February 2016.
- [6] Tabu Batugira, "Yoweri Museveni explains social media, mobile money shutdown" (Daily Nation, February 18, 2016) <<http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Yoweri-Museveni-explains-social-media-mobile-money-shutdown/-/1056/3083032/-/8h5ykhz/-/index.html>> accessed 22 February 2016.
- [7] Sarah Myers West, 'Research Shows Internet Shutdowns and State Violence Go Hand in Hand in Syria' (Electronic Frontier Foundation, 1 July 2015) <<https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2015/06/research-shows-internet-shutdowns-and-state-violence-go-hand-hand-syria>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [8] 'Access urges UN and African Union experts to take action on Burundi internet shutdown' (Access Now 29 April 2015) <<https://www.accessnow.org/access-urges-un-and-african-union-experts-to-take-action-on-burundi-interne/>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [9] Deji Olukotun, 'Government may have ordered internet shutdown in Congo-Brazzaville' (Access Now 20 October 2015) <<https://www.accessnow.org/government-may-have-ordered-internet-shutdown-in-congo-brazzaville/>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [10] Deji Olukotun and Peter Micek, 'Five years later: the internet shutdown that rocked Egypt' (Access Now 21 January 2016) <<https://www.accessnow.org/five-years-later-the-internet-shutdown-that-rocked-egypt/>> accessed 18 February 2016.
- [11] Peter Micek, 'Update: Mass internet shutdown in Sudan follows days of protest' (Access Now, 15 October 2013) <<https://www.accessnow.org/mass-internet-shutdown-in-sudan-follows-days-of-protest/>> accessed 18 February 2016.

[12] Peter Micek, 'Access submits evidence to International Criminal Court on net shutdown in Central African Republic' (Access Now 17 February 2015) <<https://www.accessnow.org/evidence-international-criminal-court-net-shutdown-in-central-african-repub/>> accessed 18 February 2016.

[13] 'Niger resorts to blocking in wake of violent protests against Charlie Hebdo cartoons.' (Access Now Facebook page 26 January 2015) <<https://www.facebook.com/accessnow/posts/10153030213288480>> accessed 18 February 2016.

[14] Peter Micek, (Access Now 23 January 2015) 'Violating International Law, DRC Orders Telcos to Cease Communications Services' <<https://www.accessnow.org/violating-international-law-drc-orders-telcos-vodafone-millicon-airtel/>> accessed 18 February 2016.

[15] Confirmed elections in Africa in 2016 include: Central African Republic (14th February), Uganda (18th February), Comoros and Niger (21st February), Rwanda (22nd -27th February), Cape Verde (TBC February), Benin (6th-13th March), Niger, Tanzania and Congo (20th March), Rwanda (22nd March), Chad (10th April), Sudan (11th April), Djibouti (TBC April), Niger (9th May), Burkina Faso (22nd May), Senegal (TBC May), Sao Tome and Principe (TBC July), Zambia (11th July), Cape Verde (TBC August), Tunisia (30th October), Ghana (7th November), Democratic Republic of Congo (27th November), Equatorial Guinea (TBC November), Gambia (1st December), Sudan, and Cote d'Ivoire (TBC December). Other elections without confirmed dates are scheduled to occur in Sierra Leone, Mauritania, Libya, Mali, Guinea, Rwanda, Somalia, and Gabon.

[16] Peter Micek, (Access Now 4 May 2015) 'Internet kill switches are a violation of human rights law, declare major UN and rights experts' <<https://www.accessnow.org/blog/2015/05/04/internet-kill-switches-are-a-violation-of-human-rights-law-declare-major-un>> accessed 18 February 2016.

“Condemnation”

Unwanted Witness

Amplifying Voices and Changing Lives



Press Release on UCC's Illegal Social Media Shutdown.

[Leave a comment](#)

Posted in [UW Statements](#).

Internet Freedoms and Right to Privacy; targeted causalities of Uganda's general elections at the expense of a weak and compromised regulatory body.

Kampala, 19th/02/2016; the Unwanted Witness Uganda is saddened by the apparent illegal efforts to curtail online freedoms at the expense of a weak communication regulator facing credibility and independence challenges. The current actions of the body suggest overlooking its overall obligation to safeguard citizens' online freedoms.

It's now about fifteen years since Ugandans got actively involved in utilizing the Internet and the various expression platforms that have provided access to independent dashboard and space for divergent views. The Internet daily use currently stands at over seven (7) million at the growth of 17% per annum and use of mobile phones is over 22 million users out of 35 million total populations.

The Internet in Uganda is no-longer a luxury but seen as part of people's lives presenting opportunities of multiple medium of communication to achieve development, connecting lives, increases people's participation in governance to shape their future, conduct business, contributes immensely to access to information online, free speech, expression, opinion and thoughts on social media and digital platforms among others.

Recalling that the internet is a source of information, news and provides platforms where individuals can express their thoughts, opinion and views, such should be kept unrestricted for the enjoyment of such rights ordinarily enjoyed offline, especially freedom of expression that has no frontiers. The notion of seeking, 'receiving and imparting information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers' has been construed to include the Internet. That while individuals have rights offline, such rights cannot be derogated whenever they get online.

Incidents below have either threatened and violated Internet freedoms and digital rights recorded pre and during the electoral process;

1. Blocking of social medias; While late 2015 and 2016 had been pitted as the year of internet freedoms in Uganda especially as presidential candidates took to various social media to reach to various audiences, and address various concerns, the continued fear among various government institutions that seek to entrench a culture of secrecy and curtail fundamental rights and freedoms still sought to curtail the said freedoms by orchestrating blanket bans and blockades of various social media sites majorly Facebook, Twitter and WatsApp. The said social medias contribute to credible election as all stakeholders including election observers use it to gather electoral related incidents on top of provide a free platform for citizens to exchange information, express their views and opinions without censorship and also engage the various duty bearers in demanding for services.

The blocking of various mobile networks during the Election Day was not only aimed at stifling Internet freedoms but also aimed at curtailing access to information through various social media platforms. While many of the voters had no idea of the location of their polling stations, and many turned to the internet for guidance, the communications commission passed draconian directives under the color of law and office directing ISPs to block access to social media networks including Facebook, Twitter and WatsApp and mobile phone services.

The Unwanted Witness condemns the blocking of social media in the strongest term possible and finds the reason of implementing the executive order as unjustifiable and inexcusable. We call upon the next parliament to amend the law, which establishes the body, to strengthen the body's independence and make it an offence to operate on directives from anyone including executive.

The Unwanted Witness would thus wish to remind the Uganda communications Commission of its mandate of providing a facilitating environment for access to the Internet and not working to the contrary. Orders to mobile networks such as those directing to block social media aim at curtailing Internet freedoms as witnessed on the Election Day. Such actions remind us of the growing interests by government to policing and controlling how such freedoms and rights are to be enjoyed online especially the right to assemble, association, the freedoms of expression, speech, thought as well as the right to privacy online, the right to communicate anonymous and the right to encrypt.

The Unwanted Witness applauds the ever-vigilant citizens, who have become civically conscious of their rights online, and even in the midst of the blockage, alternative means that seek to by-pass the blockade are being put to use. By using Internet proxies, citizens have shown the authoritarian government institutions their desire to fight and protect this Internet space from control.

We intend to challenge the blocking of social media in courts of law as a way of fighting impunity.

2. Abuse to right to Privacy/personal data; we witnessed abuse of the right to privacy/personal data with impunity. MTN Uganda disregarded its obligation to protect freedoms of its customers and shared over personal data/information of over 10 million subscribers with National Resistance Movement's Tuonge Communication Center to solicit votes for its candidate Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. Despite the petition lodged by the Unwanted Witness to the regulator to restrain MTN-Uganda from sharing personal data of its customer and investigate circumstances under which such information was shared, misuse of such data and campaigning on people's phones continued until the end of presidential campaigns. The Unwanted Witness is still waiting for the Uganda Communication Commission's report and action taken against the telecom service provider.
3. Unlawful arrest and detention of online activist; The Unwanted Witness recorded a case of kidnap and detention of an online activist Charles Rwomushana following his publication of a corpse's photo allegedly belonged to Christopher Aine, formerly heading Presidential Candidate Hon. Amama Mbabazi. Rwomushana was kidnapped on his way to WBS Television for a talk show and detained incommunicado for over 72 hours. He was charged with libel and promoting sectarianism and later released on police bond. He has since reported on police bond for five (5) times and the case has not graduated to court. The Unwanted Witness will continue representing him until he gets justice.
4. **Digital Divide:** These are hurdles both internal and external that prevent any community from becoming an integral part of the knowledge society and therefore people are denied the resulting level of human development. In Uganda Internet has worked thorough revolution, making information available, providing business opportunities and easily connecting people to one another. The Internet is a great equalizer and yet access to it is not equally distributed on grounds of gender, location and social status among others.

Although it is believed that ICTs present a significant opportunity for advancing gender equality, women's empowerment and equitable development, the digital gender gap is widening. Research has shown that Ugandan women on average earn 30% to 50% less than men, which diminish the ability of women to afford, adopt and benefit from broadband access. Women are said to possess a high illiteracy rate of 82% compared to their male counterparts of 64%. It is crucial that the next government closes this gap for women empowerment and enriching their lives.

The digital divide is also evident between the urban and the rural communities. 80% of Uganda's population lives in the rural areas and yet 70% of the communication services are in urban areas denying opportunities to rural dwellers that produce more than 80% of the country's wealth. Internet access in the rural area is impeded by infrastructure, limited access to the electricity, high poverty levels and illiteracy.

5. **Access:** Internet access continues to grow in Uganda with a reported current Internet penetration rate of 18% from 16% in 2013, however access to broadband is still rare and only available in urban areas with less than 1% of the population estimated to

have fixed line broadband subscription. Internet speed is also still low with an average of just over 1.5mbps.

6. **Digital Rights:** This refers to the access and utilization of various internet based platforms to exercise such rights that would otherwise be enjoyed offline. The current government has failed to strike a balance; it is concentrating more on control and neglecting the aspect of access. This is reflected in the pieces of legislations such as interception of communication, computer misuse and the communication regulatory authority, which were all passed in a period of only three years.

The existence of such regulations without a data protection law is an infringement on citizens' digital rights and freedom of expression by encouraging self-censorship. It is therefore important that the next government operationalizes the privacy and data protection law as a safeguard to citizens' digital rights.

7. **Legal Framework:** The Uganda constitution provides for freedom of expression and speech in addition to the right to access information. However, several cyber laws appear to negate these constitutional guarantees for freedom of expression. For instance, the Regulation of Interception of Communications Act, Anti Terrorism Act, 2011 Computer Misuse Act includes provisions that can specifically limit freedom of expression online. Under Art 2, dissemination of offensive communication is prohibited alongside cyber harassment.
8. **The Ideal Environment:** In recognition of the Internet's powerful potential to enhance economic growth, the next government ought to invest considerable resources in the development of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure networks in order to bred a knowledge society.

The Unwanted Witness wishes to remind the said government institutions of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights that provides; *"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."*

The above should be read in line with the 1995 constitution of the Republic of Uganda under Article 29 that provides for the protection of freedom of expression. Expression as noted either connotes the right to freely speak out regardless of frontier.

"Political interferences are killing the young Ugandan Internet and any behavior seeking to control the use of the Internet will have terrifying effects on how citizens use the internet and exercise their online freedoms in future. Any action intended to protect national security has got to be justified without necessarily using national security as scape goat to undermine the enjoyment of online rights and freedoms" Said Jeff Wokulira Ssebagala, the Chief Executive Officer, the Unwanted Witness

Recalling the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution affirms that internet freedom is a basic human right and that people have the right to freedom of expression on the internet, Uganda needs to do more than just talking to necessitate all Ugandans acquire access to the internet through the establishment of necessary infrastructure and guarantee safety and security while online. This should not give rise to the infringement of the rights to freely utilize the Internet like as witnessed on the 18th February 2016, Election Day.

Therefore, the Unwanted Witness wishes to make the following specific recommendations;

1. Revise existing regulations that impede citizens from enjoying their constitutional right of freedom of expression. But also ensure that the regulations promote the use of Internet and privacy of citizens online.
2. Enact the privacy and data protection bill into law to prevent further cases of data misuse
3. Government should investigate cases of inhuman and degrading treatment of online activists and ensure errant offices are punished.
4. Government should desist from compromising the independence of state institutions.
5. Bridge the knowledge gap by making Internet accessible to all including women, children and the rural populace.
6. Bridge the rural-urban digital divide through connecting rural areas and strengthening the national backbone.

For More Information contact;

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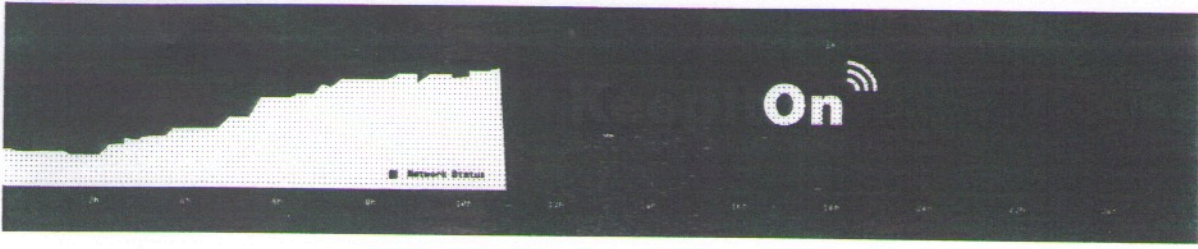
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Blog: <http://unwantedwitnessuganda.wordpress.com/>

<https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/press-release-on-uccs-illegal-social-media-shutdown/>

"Condemnations"

<https://www.accessnow.org/uganda-blocks-social-media-harms-human-rights/>



Freedom of Expression

Uganda blocks social media (again), harms human rights

accessnow 11 May 2016 | 6:08 pm

Today the government in Uganda blocked social media services in anticipation of the swearing-in ceremony for President Yoweri Museveni that will take place tomorrow. Uganda's telecommunications regulator, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), confirmed the block, citing "national security" as the reason. This is the second time this year that Uganda has carried out an internet shutdown in the election period. It's part of a deeply troubling trend, and one that we specifically called out in our submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council for Uganda's Universal Periodic Review.

The telco Airtel Uganda cited the blocking order from the government here:



Airtel Uganda

✓ @Airtel Ug

Social Media will be temporarily disabled as per UCC directive. All our other services are available. We apologize for any inconveniences.

5:58 PM - 11 May 2016

MTN Uganda also acknowledged the blocking order:



MTN Uganda

✓ @mtnug

The UCC has issued a directive to shut down all social media platforms immediately until otherwise advised by government.
(3/4)

7:01 PM - 11 May 2016

Ugandans expressed their discontent, connecting the shutdown to one that took place in Ethiopia's Oromia region:

Simegnish Yekoye Or Lily

about 4 months ago

This is outrageous. Ethiopia is really setting a bad example to her neighbors and neighbors are taking the lesson in its worst form.



MTN Uganda

Telecommunication · 793,084 Likes

· 11 May · 🌐

MTN Uganda wishes to inform its esteemed customers that in line with the requirement of its license specifically article 7.4 that requires MTN to provide assi...

See more

The last shutdown in Uganda took place in February, when the government blocked WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and mobile banking services just as citizens headed to the polls. At the time, we joined a coalition of groups to ask that the government stop the shutdown.

Internet shutdowns do not restore order, protect rights, or keep people safe. They also come at a significant financial cost. Our conservative estimate for the last shutdown in Uganda comes in at around USD\$25 million lost per day for e-banking services alone. Currently, in this shutdown, it

appears that mobile banking services remain online, but there will likely be knock-on economic effects for blocking social media, which is often a key platform for businesses.

We cannot allow shutdowns to become the new norm in Uganda or anywhere else. Human rights are at stake, and research shows that internet shutdowns and state violence go hand in hand.

That is why we launched the **#KeepitOn campaign**, through which we aim to dismantle the shutdown “machine” — reaching out to everyone from individuals that are affected to the people at companies, within governments, and at international governmental bodies who can work to stop this harmful practice.


We have recorded more than 10 intentional disruptions so far this year, and we don’t want 2016 to be the year that internet shutdowns become commonplace. We call on the African Union and Human Rights Council at the United Nations to condemn internet shutdowns as violations of international law. Further, we ask all telcos in the country, including MTN and Airtel, to push back against the order using every tool at their disposal, whether legal, political, or commercial.

You can learn more at <https://www.accessnow.org/internet-shutdowns>, where we will be drawing attention to campaigns globally and sharing opportunities to take action. If you’re part of an organization that wants to help stop shutdowns in Africa or anywhere else, you can reach out to deji@accessnow.org. Meanwhile, we encourage you to stay tuned by following us on Twitter or Facebook, and participate in the conversation using the hashtag **#KeepitOn**.

Notifications


Back to Chrome

09:53

90% 

Tweet



MTN Uganda 
@mtnug

The UCC has directed MTN to disable all SocialMedia & MobileMoney services due to a threat to Public Order & Safety.



2/18/16, 14:49

348 RETWEETS 66 LIKES



Reply to MTN Uganda



Home



Notifications



Messages



Me

[Handwritten signature]

"Notifications"

Tweet



Airtel Uganda ✓
@Airtel_Ug

Social Media will be temporarily disabled as per UCC directive. All our other services are available. We apologize for any inconveniences.

5/11/16, 17:58

129 RETWEETS 26 LIKES



Ivan Nuwah @UgNuwah
@airtel_ug how about mobile money

5/11/16



Amos mukudu @AmosMukudu
@Airtel_Ug mbuzi

5/11/16



Steve Juuko @AfricanStig
@Airtel_Ug muswade nnyo bambi

5/11/16



ISAAC MUKONYEZI @imukonyezi
@Airtel_Ug more taxpayers money for you. 😊

5/11/16



Tsubira isaac @tusu11
@Airtel_Ug so airtel where wa we

5/11/16



Paul Käggwa @pokaggwa
@Airtel_Ug okay fine.

5/11/16



Reply to Airtel Uganda



M7"

<http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Yoweri-Museveni-explains-social-media-mobile-money-shutdown/-/1056/3083032/-/8h5ykhz/-/index.html>

Yoweri Museveni explains social media, mobile money shutdown

Daily Nation - Thursday February 18 2016



Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni at a past rally in Kampala. He said social media sites were taken down on February 18, 2016 as a temporary security measure. PHOTO | AFP | ISAAC KASAMANI

In Summary

- Mr Museveni is seeking re-election on National Resistance Movement (NRM) party ticket.
- Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) cited unspecified national security reason for the shutdown.

KAMPALA

Uganda President Yoweri Museveni on Thursday said social media sites were taken down as a temporary security measure.

Mr Museveni, who is seeking re-election in the ongoing voting exercise, said the move was necessary because some people were using Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to peddle lies.

“That steps must be taken for security to stop so many (social media users from) getting in trouble; it is temporary because some people use those pathways for telling lies.

“You tell lies but you do not know that the authorities (can) restrain those (platforms) for some time,” he told journalists Thursday afternoon shortly after casting his vote in the western Kiruhura district.

Mr Museveni is seeking re-election on the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party ticket

The Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) cited an unspecified national security reason for the shutdown at around 8am Thursday, an hour after voting began.

Mobile Telecommunications Network (MTN), the leading mobile service provider in Uganda, posted on its Twitter page that the UCC had ordered the company to take down the sites and disable the mobile money transfer platform.

“The UCC has directed MTN to disable all social media & mobile money services due to a threat to public order & safety,” the company stated.

"Shutdown II"

Unwanted Witness

Amplifying Voices and Changing Lives



Uganda's Internet is blocked for the second time in less than 3 Months.

[Comments Off](#)

Posted in [News Alerts](#) and tagged [Internet Shutdowns in Uganda](#), [Museveni fifth term in office](#), [Museveni swearing in](#), [Second Social media shutdown](#), [UCC shuts down Social Media](#).

Kampala May 11, 2016; Its 5:45PM Ugandan time, the government blocks the internet in a space of less than three months. The blocking has occurred few hours to the swearing-in of President Museveni 5th term in office expected on May 12th.

This follows few days after the same government issued a blanket banned to mainstream media restricting them from broadcasting live activities of opposition Forum for Democratic Change activities.

According to the regulator Uganda Communication Commission Chief Godfrey Mutabazi says the internet was blocked on security grounds and suspected a security breach.

The Unwanted Witness is investigating the circumstances that led to the closure and will keep you posted to the development.

For more information contact;
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<https://unwantedwitness.or.ug/ugandas-internet-is-blocked-for-the-second-time-in-less-than-3-months/>

"Shut down II"

Government shuts down social media again

The temporary shutdown of Facebook and other sites was reminiscent of the February 18 blockade which lasted about 48 hours.

Daily Monitor – Friday May 13 2016



UCC's executive director Godfrey Mutabazi

By FREDERIC MUSISI

KAMPALA- The nearly 24-hour shutdown of social media as Mr. Museveni was sworn in for a fifth elective term was nothing out of the ordinary. It happened before, the day he was reelected two months ago.

From about 5pm on Wednesday internet service providers, MTN, Airtel and others, blocked access to Facebook, Whatsapp and Twitter via handled devices which the industry regulator, Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), said was ordered by "security organs." The blackout went on throughout Thursday.

UCC's executive director Godfrey Mutabazi was non-committal on stating which security organ particularly ordered for the shutdown but said "they cited security reasons" as the country hosted dozens of dignitaries who attended the swearing in ceremony at Kololo in Kampala.

The temporary shutdown of Facebook and other sites was reminiscent of the February 18 blockade which lasted about 48 hours.

Mr. Mutabazi, in an affidavit on March 17 during the Supreme Court deliberations in which President Museveni's victory was challenged, said he received instructions from the Inspector General of Police Kale Kayihura to shut down social media and mobile money facilities owing to security concerns.

Telecom companies, MTN, with the largest subscriber base in a statement said: "In line with the requirement of its license specifically Article 7.4 that requires [MTN] to provide assistance to government in the event of an emergency or crisis related to national Security, UCC has issued a directive to shut down all social media platforms immediately until otherwise advised by government." Airtel, in messages sent out to its customers said, "as per UCC directive social media has been temporarily blocked."

The US Embassy in Kampala condemned the act saying: "As we said before, such acts send a wrong message to Ugandans and are violations of their rights, as guaranteed in the country's laws & Constitution." "A society that is free, vibrant & successful depends on free flow of info & ideas, including access to info online & through free, independent press."

The shutdown of social media came on the heels of another government directive warning against and banning media houses from covering live proceedings of the opposition party, FDC.

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<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Government-shuts-down-social-media-again/688334-3201024-qxvhrxz/index.html>