INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

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PRESS RELEASE - COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE

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Uganda – General Court Martial must respect ruling by Constitutional Court

February 20, 2006

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today expressed its deep concern over the continuation of a trial of civilians before the military General Court Martial. The civilians under trial are members of the 22 persons accused of terrorism and firearms offences with opposition Presidential candidate, Kizza Besigye. On 31 January 2006, the Constitutional Court of Uganda ruled that under anti-terrorism laws civilians can only be prosecuted in the High Court of Uganda.

"The continuation of this trial in clear defiance of a judgment of the Constitutional Court is the latest in a series of attacks on the rule of law in Uganda", said Kathurima M'Inoti, ICJ Commissioner and trial observer.

The ICJ urges the General Court Martial to immediately stop its illegal proceedings and to respect the bail orders granted to the accused by the High Court. The ICJ is also deeply concerned by reported statements made by the Coordinator of Security Services, General David Tinyefunza - including statements that the military will not accept judgments of the Ugandan Courts and accusations that judges are siding with wrong-doers instead of helping the State.

"These proceedings have already done serious damage to the rule of law in Uganda. Let the High Court now settle the matter without further interference and intimidation by the executive and the military", added Kathurima M'Inoti.

For further information, please contact the International Commission of Jurists +41 (0) 22 979 3800.