



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

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PRESS RELEASE-COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE

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UGANDA: ICJ observes trials of opposition leader

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today began its observation of the civilian trial of Col (Rtd) Dr. Kizza Besigye, Chairperson of the Forum for Democratic Change. Dr. Besigye is charged with offences of treason, concealment of treason and rape in the High Court and with terrorism and firearms offences in a military court.

The ICJ's Kenyan Commissioner, Kathurima M'Inoti, a highly respected advocate and a member of the Kenyan Law Reform Commission, will act as trial observer on behalf of the ICJ.

"The trial observation will look closely at the fairness of proceedings and whether there are interferences in the administration of justice by the executive or security forces," said Gerald Staberock, Director of the Global Security and Rule of Law Programme. "In order to create confidence in the rule of law in Uganda, it is vital that the High Court trial fully meets international standards for a fair and public trial. It is also vital that the legal dispute before the Uganda Constitutional Court surrounding the legality of the military trial is resolved swiftly as possible," he noted. The ICJ will also seek to observe hearings before the military court should they proceed.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Kizza Besigye recently returned to Uganda after four years of exile in advance of the Presidential election campaign. After his return he was arrested and charged with treason, concealment of treason and rape before the Ugandan High Court. He is also charged with terrorism and unlawful possession of firearms before the General Court Martial. The ICJ observation mission has been initiated in light of serious allegations of interferences by the executive and security forces in the judicial proceedings (See Press Release dated 13 December - Uganda: ICJ alarmed by assault on civilian judiciary, ICJ to send trial observer).

For further information, please contact Gerald Staberock, Director of the Global Security and Rule of Law Programme of the International Commission of Jurists, +41(0) 22 979 3800.

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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