

Uganda domestic radio and newspapers, May 3rd, 2010 (covering April 26th to May 2nd 2010)

By Laura Schülke, MIGS reporter for Uganda

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. April 27, 2010, in English

"Otunnu: State House wants more radios to apologize" by Mercy Nalugo and Sarah Gauvin

- State House has demanded an apology from all radio stations in northern Uganda which hosted the leader of the Uganda People's Congress, Mr. Olara Otunnu, where he allegedly said that President Museveni aided the war in the region.
- President Museveni's Press Secretary Tamale Mirundi yesterday told journalists at the Uganda Media Centre that the radios have to apologize or face punitive action. But Mr. Mirundi did not name the radios that are supposed to apologize. He further demanded that Voice of Lango FM radio station, which recently apologized to issue fresh apologies because the apology that ran on its airwaves was not convincing.
- "Neither President Museveni nor the National Resistance Army now UPDF ever started the war in northern Uganda," he said. He said when the war was at its peak, President Museveni was the only leader who spent months in the bushes flushing out rebels who had infiltrated many villages.

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. May 1, 2010, in English

"US Parliament approves LRA legislation" by Risdal Kasasira

- The foreign affairs committee of the US House of Representatives on Thursday 29 of April voted unanimously to approve a legislation that lays a multilateral strategy to stop the Lord's Resistance Army violence.
- The approval by the committee makes LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, eligible to be voted on by the full House of Representatives. If approved by the full House, where it has the support of 187 bipartisan co-sponsors, the legislation will be sent to President Obama's desk for signing.
- According to a statement issued by American advocacy organizations, Resolve Uganda and Enough, the committee's approval is crucial to have the legislation passed. "The committee's vote reflects unprecedented consensus in Congress that President Obama should be taking much stronger steps to stop LRA attacks against innocent civilians," said Michael Poffenberger, executive director of Resolve Uganda.
- The bill seeks to help end one Africa's longest-running conflicts by requiring the Obama Administration to develop a multilateral strategy to help permanently stop LRA violence and generate increased American assistance to address the needs of displaced persons, former child soldiers, and other civilians affected by the conflict.

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. May 2, 2010, in English

"Government hits back on Clinton report" by Emmanuel Gyezaho and E. Mulondo

- The government has reacted angrily to Washington's warnings of early "damage" to the country's organization of next year's crunch presidential election. Information and National Guidance Minister Kabakumba Masiko expressed disappointment to the report issued by US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to the Congress which raised concern about police harassment of opposition politicians and heightened stifling of free media.

- Ms Kabakumba concluded in a telephone interview with Sunday Monitor on Friday that the report offered "nothing new", and suggested that its contents were the usual banter from western governments.
- In her first report appraising Congress on Uganda's 2011 election preparedness, an assignment she will have to execute quarterly up until 30 days after next year's election, Ms Clinton faults the government for taking "no action to further the independence of the Electoral Commission" and concluded: "[The] exclusion of key stakeholders from the appointment process compromised the [Electoral] Commission's independence and will damage the credibility of the 2011 electoral process."
- Reacting to the report, Ms Kabakumba asked: "Is it a crime to renew the contracts when our laws provide for it? She [Clinton] should be informed that there is nowhere in our law that says parties should be included."
- The Opposition Shadow Attorney General Erias Lukwago described Ms Clinton's report as "spot on" and said the absence of representatives of the opposition on the Commission would render it incompetent to conduct a free and fair election come 2011.

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. May 2, 2010, in English

"Uganda's press rating declines" by Emmanuel Mulondo

- The world celebrates Press Freedom Day tomorrow but Uganda's press freedom ratings have plummeted, a rights group has said. Uganda, according to Freedom House based in the US, slumped from position 54, a point from last year's rating that put the country at 53.
- The Freedom House Senior Program Officer, Ms Courtney Radsch, who was in Uganda to participate in a media dialogue on Friday 30 April, told participants that the slump was partly due to the draconian press and journalist (Amendment) Bill 2010 that the government is pushing.
- Once passed, the bill will criminalize critical journalism and make the media environment hostile. Information Minister Kabakumba Masiko says the Bill is aimed at fostering a "free but responsible" media.
- The Bill provides for licensing and de-licensing of media houses and bars them from publishing information injurious to "national security, stability and unity." It also provides for suspension of journalists from practice if they transgress.
- Former Supreme Court Judge Justice George Kanyeihamba described the Bill as evil and called for its dropping. Journalists, media executives, civil society and diplomats meeting in Kampala on Friday had also urged the government to drop the Bill but Minister Kabakumba Masiko said government would proceed with it.
- At 50, Tanzania ranks best in East Africa while Rwanda at 83 ranks worst. Kenya is at position 57, an improvement in last year's rating at 60. Tanzania retained her rating at 50.

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. May 2, 2010, in English

"House passes third electoral law reform Bill" by Emmanuel Gyezaho

- Several days of haggling finally bore fruit on Thursday evening [29 April] after Parliament passed the third of four crucial electoral law reform Bills. Although the government managed to make significant concessions, there was a general feeling from the opposition that the Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill would not guarantee that next years general election would be free and fair.

- But the new Bill was passed with several key amendments pushed by the opposition. As it stands now, there will be no more polling stations at military barracks; polling agents of presidential candidates will sit at the same table with returning officers to monitor the elections; individuals who use government resources at the polls will be prosecuted; voters without voter's cards on polling day will be allowed to vote if their names and photographs appear on the register.
- According to the Bill, the Electoral Commission must provide political parties and their candidate serial numbers of ballot papers and serial numbers of seals of the ballot boxes prior to the polls.
- These proposals were the key highlights of the opposition's push for reform.
- Shadow Attorney General and Kampala MP Erias Lukwago said, however: "We did not discuss the restructuring of the Electoral Commission which is key to a free and fair election. Even if we go by these amendments, in the absence of an independent Commission, then we won't have a free election." His comments came only a day after Washington warned of an early "damage" to the country's 2011 vote preparations, citing a "compromised" Commission.