

Uganda domestic radio and newspapers, August 30th, 2010 (covering August 23rd to August 29th 2010)

By Laura Schülke, MIGS reporter for Uganda

1) State-owned media

The New Vision (state-owned, mass-circulation daily) website. August 25, 2010, in English

"Constitutional Court scraps law on sedition" [Author unknown]

- The Constitutional Court has scrapped the law on sedition. It follows a petition by East Africa Media Institute and a journalist Andrew Mwenda in which he was challenging the provisions on sedition in the Penal Code arguing that it contravenes the right to freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution.
- Sedition is where a person utters or publishes statements aimed at bringing hatred, contempt or disaffection against the president, the government or the judiciary.
- In a judgment of five Constitutional Court justices read by the registrar, the justices unanimously ruled that the sedition law is unconstitutional as its clauses limit the public's right to enjoy their freedom of expression and speech.
- The justices, however, maintained the law on promoting sectarianism urging that there is nothing that makes it unconstitutional since it came in existence before the 1995 constitution. Sectarianism is printing, publishing or uttering statements or acts likely to promote hatred, contempt, hostility or ill-will against somebody or a group of people on account of religion, tribe, ethnic or regional origin.
- Mwenda was accused of moderating a radio talk show in 2005 which intended to cause hatred to person of the president. He was facing 25 charges 17 of sedition and 8 of promoting sectarianism before the Nakawa court. However, Mwenda says he is not relieved because he still has charges of promoting sectarianism which are pending.

The New Vision (state-owned, mass-circulation daily) website. August 26, 2010, in English

"Media, rights bodies hail sedition ruling" by Steven Candia

- The media fraternity and human rights organizations yesterday hailed the constitutional court ruling on the charge of sedition, saying it encourages the enjoyment of human rights, especially freedom of expression.
- The Independent Media Council of Uganda (Imcu) and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (Fhri) welcomed the ruling, saying it has enlarged the space for freedom of expression and ultimately the enjoyment of other rights.
- However, one should keep in mind that some bills still aim at stifling the media, such as the proposed Press and Journalist (Amendment) Bill 2010, which seeks to put in place an unfavorable regulatory framework on media houses.

Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Radio Kampala, 0400 GMT. August 26, in English

- Six candidates of the ongoing National Resistance Movement primaries in Kabale District were summoned to appear before the district disciplinary committee to answer charges of electoral malpractice.
- Shadow attorney-general and a Kampala Central member of parliament are taking the Electoral Commission to court for failing to comply with the electoral laws that were passed by parliament.

Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Radio Kampala, 0400 GMT. August 27, in English

- Human Rights Watch urges the government to do a census on the number of women with disability in northern Uganda.

Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC) Radio Kampala, 0400 GMT. August 29, in English

- The ICC has reported Kenya to the UN Security Council after the Sudanese president visited Kenya on 27 August.
- A teacher in Kibale District has asked colleagues to advocate for peace in the society.
- The Commissioner General of Uganda Prisons says 5,000 inmates are sentenced with the death penalty across the country.

2) Privately owned media

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. August 25, 2010, in English

“Ugandan Catholic bishops criticize electoral commission” [Author unknown]

- The Catholic Church has raised "deep concern" over staggering preparations for next year's elections and suggested review of "appointment of the Electoral Commission" as part of wide reforms to forestall likely anarchy.
- The Episcopal Conference, in a pastoral letter of 11 June 2010 circulated to media houses yesterday, expressed dissatisfaction with the government's and the Electoral Commission's handling of pre-vote activities.
- It features: "Elections by their nature should and must provide our electorate with regular opportunities to peacefully comment, challenge, change and review their government...[ellipsis as published] As the country is preparing for general elections in 2011, we religious leaders cannot ignore Uganda's problems of tyranny, war, violence and fraud."
- They raised issue with stolen votes in previous elections, the role of the army in elections, late enactment of laws and fund releases to the EC as well as operational "shortcomings" that have eroded public confidence in the electoral body. "An effective and accountable Electoral Commission is required to guarantee free and fair elections," the clergymen wrote. "There is, therefore, a pressing need to tackle areas where the EC has been inefficient. However, this requires a strict review of the appointment and management of the Electoral Commission."

The Daily Monitor (leading privately-owned newspaper) website. August 25, 2010, in English

“Ugandan opposition parties differ over plans to boycott 2011 polls” [Author unknown]

- A crisis meeting convened on August 23rd to iron out disagreements in the opposition coalition failed to agree on whether to boycott the 2011 elections, effectively ending their cooperation as initially imagined. Reports from the closed-door meeting indicate that Uganda People's Congress president Olara Otunnu unsuccessfully tried to convince the other four Inter-Party Cooperation leaders to boycott the elections.
- Mr. Otunnu argued that the opposition should not take part in the elections when they are well aware that the national voters register is bloated with ghost voters who will "vote" in favor of the ruling party.

- Mr. Otunnu's proposal was rejected by other leaders in the coalition; Dr Kizza Besigye (FDC), Asuman Basalirwa (Jeema), Michael Mabikke (SDP) and CP's Prof James Kigongo, in the name of their voters' trust.