

Uganda - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Uganda, officially the Republic of Uganda, is a landlocked country in East Africa. President Museveni has been president since 1986, and has prolonged his term again and again through corruption and non-democratic legislative and electoral strategies. The international community is highly critical of Museveni's involvement in a number of the conflicts in Africa's Great Lakes region, as well as the government's anti-homosexual laws.

Official language: Swahili, English

Ethnic groups: 17.4% Baganda, 9.8% Banyankole, 8.4% Basoga, 7.0% Bakiga, 6.1% Iteso, 3.2% Langi, 4.8% Acholi, 4.1% Bagisu, 4.14% Lugbara, 33.3% others

Government: Dominant-party semi-presidential republic

- President: Yoweri Museveni
- Vice President: Edward Ssekandi
- Prime Minister: Ruhakana Rugunda

Death penalty: Retentionist

Population: 40.39 million

Life expectancy: 54.93 years

Under-5 mortality: 59.2 per 1000

Adult literacy: 78.4 percent



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Largely disrespected ²

There are several reports of government agents committing arbitrary or unlawful killings. Security forces have killed civilians during land disputes, student protests, and ethnic conflicts. There are also reports of political killings by non-state actors, particularly Ugandan rebel groups.

Freedom from disappearance



Largely disrespected ³

Opposition groups reports politically-motivated disappearances, including individuals disappearing after having been detained by the police.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Largely disrespected ⁴

The Uganda Human Rights Commission and other human rights groups report incidents of torture and rape by security forces. There are numerous reports of excessive force and abuse by security forces during arrest and in police detention facilities.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Largely disrespected ⁵

Security forces are known to arbitrary arrest or detain civilians, including opposition leaders, journalists, politicians, and activists.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Partially respected ⁶

The constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respects this. Authorities usually respect court orders, but there is a problem of corruption, understaffing, and inefficiency in the lower courts.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Largely disrespected ⁷

The constitution prohibits such arbitrary interference, but the government uses anti-terrorism statutes to monitor telephone and internet communications, and the police do not always obtain search warrants to enter private homes and offices.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)⁸



Score: 32.58, Rank: 102 / 180 – Partially controlled, limited or intimidated⁹

The government restricts freedom of speech and press through acts of violence and intimidation against journalists. Media outlets that cover opposition candidates are threatened with closure.

Freedom from academic censorship



Respected¹⁰

Although authorities require research clearance from the Uganda National Council for Science and technology, universities do not report any unnecessary delays or political interference with academic freedom.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Largely disrespected¹¹

The government does not respect freedom of assembly or association. Bureaucratic elements repeatedly deny permission on technicalities, and police often use excessive force and “preventative arrests” to disperse protests and lawful rallies, and to harass opposition leaders.

Freedom of religion



Partially respected¹²

The constitution stipulates that there is no state religion and bans discrimination based on religion. The government requires religious groups to register, and restricts the activities of religious groups which it defines as “cults”.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Partially respected¹³

The government has established a system for providing protection to refugees, and generally provided them with adequate protection. Refugees are also afforded access to basic services without charge. However, there are problems with backlogs of refugees and lack of naturalization.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{14 15}



5 / 7 – Partly free¹⁶

Most civil liberties are protected by the constitution, but the government often violates freedoms of press, speech, assembly, and religion when they are used to criticize the government’s policies.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁷



6 / 7 – Not free¹⁸

Although elections are supposed to be free, fair, and periodical, they are marred by serious irregularities. Opposition to the ruling party is hindered by harassment of party leaders, restrictive party registration requirements, and use of state resources to support the current regime.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)¹⁹



Score: 25%, Rank: 139 / 168 – Highly corrupt²⁰

Although some anticorruption laws are enforced, resulting in the arrest and suspension of several police officers and magistrates, most corrupt officials in the security forces, judiciary, and all levels of government operate with impunity.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Partially respected²¹

Some human rights NGOs operate without government restriction, but discriminatory policies prevent LGBT organizations from receiving official status and NGOs working in the areas of governance, human rights, and political participation are held under extra scrutiny.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)²²



Score: 70.8%, Rank: 58 / 145 – Somewhat unequal rights²³

Rape and domestic abuse remains a widespread problem, particularly in the rural areas. Women suffer societal discrimination, despite anti-discrimination, but have nearly equal access to education and some degree of representation in government.

Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)²⁴



Score: 54%, Rank: 133 / 165 – Slightly vulnerable²⁵

The government provides for free primary education for up to 4 children per family as well as universal secondary education. Child abuse and sexual exploitation remain serious problems, and forced marriages are common in rural areas.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Largely disrespected²⁶

Although the law prohibits discrimination based on disabilities, there are no penalties in place to enforce these laws. There are reports of discrimination in employment and in access to public services. Government agencies responsible for enforcing their rights are largely inefficient.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Partially respected²⁷

There are isolated incidents of violence among ethnic minorities in some parts of the country. Historically, the government has displaced indigenous groups to create national parks and reserves.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{28 29}

Same-sex sexual conduct is criminalized in Uganda, and LGBT people face widespread discrimination, societal violence and harassment, legal restrictions, intimidation, and threats.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Largely disrespected³⁰

The rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining are generally neither respected nor protected by the government. Workers, other than public officials, can form and join unions, but anti-union discrimination occurs regularly and the gov't does not apply labour laws effectively.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Largely disrespected³¹

The government prohibits forced labour, but doesn't expressly prohibit prison labour. Penalties for violation of forced labour laws are not severe enough to deter violations, and some laws are not enforced. Compulsory labour continues to happen, particularly in prisons.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Largely disrespected³²

Laws on child labour are contradictory, establishing conflicting minimum ages of employment under various conditions. Child labour is common, especially in the informal sector, and there have been no convictions under the 2006 law that prohibits child labour.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Largely disrespected³³

A minimum wage was established in 2003 but was never effectively implemented, and the law provides for a maximum work week of 48 hours, which may be extended to 56 hours. Safety standards are not enforced, and deaths occur because of unsafe workplace conditions.

Right to employment



3.8% - Reasonable unemployment³⁴

The unemployment rate is relatively low in Uganda and is projected to be lower slightly over the next few years.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Uganda." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252741#wrapper>.

³ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 179 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (25 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (29 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (32 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (49 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (42 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

⁹ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>.

¹⁰ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Uganda." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252741#wrapper>.

¹¹ "Uganda." World Report 2016: Uganda. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/uganda>.

¹² "Uganda." International Religious Freedom Report for 2014. January 1, 2015. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238274>.

¹³ "Uganda." World Report 2016: Uganda. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/uganda>.

¹⁴ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁵ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed August 4, 2016.

<https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2016/methodology>.

¹⁶ "Uganda." Freedom in the World 2016: Uganda. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/uganda>.

¹⁷ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2016/methodology>.

¹⁸ "Uganda." Freedom in the World 2016: Uganda. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/uganda>.

¹⁹ Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²⁰ "Uganda." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016. <https://www.transparency.org/country/#UGA>.

²¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Uganda." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252741#wrapper>.

²² This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²³ "Uganda." World Economic Forum. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2014. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=CIV>.

²⁴ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁵ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Score." The KidsRights Index. October 2015. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/Portals/5/Overall%20Index%20October%202015.pdf>.

²⁶ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Uganda." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252741#wrapper>.

²⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁸ "ILGA State-Sponsored Homophobia." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. May 2015. Accessed August 4, 2016.

http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2015.pdf. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³⁰ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Uganda." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2016. Accessed August 4, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252741#wrapper>.

³¹ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁴ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. October 2013. Accessed August 4, 2016. http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/multimedia/maps-and-charts/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm.