

**PRESS RELEASE**

09 August 2011

The Foreign Correspondents' Association of Uganda (FCAU) is concerned over a recent series of abuses aimed at journalists covering Uganda's 2016 general election. FCAU recognizes Uganda as a country with a vibrant media landscape and with room for expression of diverging opinions; we call upon the authorities to safeguard this status by respecting the freedom of journalists both foreign and local. FCAU represents more than thirty journalists, Ugandan as well as foreign, who work for foreign media houses. FCAU is affiliated to the Nairobi-based Foreign Correspondents' Association of East Africa (FCAEA).

FCAU states the following:

- FCAU condemns the recent pepper spraying of one of its members by an apparent plainclothes security operative, an action that was unjustified. FCAU calls upon the Ugandan authorities to join us in publicly condemning this action, as well as to investigate the matter and take appropriate steps against the apparent operative. FCAU wishes to point out that a formal complaint is being prepared.
- FCAU wishes to rectify a narrative making the rounds, that two foreign journalists "assaulted" the police officer in charge at the scene at the time of the pepper spraying incident. The only thing the journalists did was to vocally protest the willful pepper spraying of their colleague and to demand an explanation.
- FCAU is concerned about the security of personal data of journalists following the online publication of one foreign journalist's picture and passport data.
- FCAU wishes to clarify that no foreign journalist has been arrested or deported from Uganda following these recent incidents, contrary to some rumors circulating on social media.

Regarding the pepper spraying incident:

On February 22, 2016, photographer Isaac Kasamani, who works for press agency AFP, was taking pictures outside the home of politician Kizza Besigye in Kasangati near Uganda's capital Kampala. As Mr Kasamani was busy carrying out his work, he was pepper sprayed in his face – an action that, FCAU emphasizes, was unjustified. Attached to this statement are pictures that show the incident, including one image of the apparent security operative moving back to the police lines after the spraying.

Regarding the assertion on internet forums in Uganda as well as in an official statement from Ugandan authorities, that two foreign journalists "assaulted" the police officer in charge at the time of the pepper spraying incident:

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FCAU is a chapter of the Foreign Correspondents Association of East Africa (FCAEA)

Video footage clearly shows that the journalists merely protested the fact that one of their colleagues had just been pepper sprayed in the face for no valid reason. As is audible on the video footage, the journalists were requesting the officer in charge to explain the incident.

Regarding the publication of one foreign journalist's passport data:

Like any other person, journalists should be able to trust that their personal data are secure. In this case not only were personal data distributed, they were apparently also used to fabricate a video in which the journalist in question supposedly states that he was asked to stage-manage chaos outside politician Kizza Besigye's home. The voice-over in the video is fake, and any claim that the journalist was involved in stage-managing chaos is completely untrue.

FCAU wishes to underscore its belief in the importance of factually correct reporting, whether it concerns the news in Uganda or stories that are about journalists themselves, as is currently the case. Lastly: FCAU is open to engagement, without compromising on the tenet of independent journalism. FCAU reiterates its call to allow journalists both local and foreign to do their work without hindrance.

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Board of FCAU