



FHRI NEWSLETTER

January – December 2022; Volume 18.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

FHRI'S 11TH BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTED



FHRI's new Board of Directors elected during the 11th General Assembly, that took place at the Human Rights House on 27th August 2022. (L—R) Mr. Rajab Lukwago - Vice Chairperson, Ms. Margaret P. Namagembe—Hon. Treasurer, Dr. Kaggwa Godfrey—Board Member, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana—Ex Officio, Ms. Bernadette N. Bakkidde—Hon. Secretary, Dr. Miriam Kiconco—Board Member, Mr. Edward S. Kyazze—Board Member and (inset) Dr. Josephine Ndagire—Chairperson.

On the 27th of August 2022, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) held her 24th Annual General Meeting (AGM) which also doubled as the 11th General Assembly at the Human Rights House, Nsambya. The General Assembly held once in every three years accords the members an

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MAKERERE WINS THE 13TH INTER-UNIVERSITY HUMAN RIGHTS COMPETITION, 2022



Students of Makerere University, winners of the 13th Inter-University Human Rights Competition addressing the audience before receiving their award at Bishop Stuart University, Mbarara on 21st June 2022.

The 13th Inter-University Human Rights Competition took place over the course of 2 days, from 20th to 21st June 2022. The competition was held under the theme: 'Building Back Better: Realizing Human Rights in the Post Covid-19 Era'. It was hosted by Bishop Stuart University in

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FHRI OPENS NEW LEGAL AID OFFICES IN BUSHENYI

It was such a colourful event attended by different stakeholders as the new FHRI Legal Aid Project was inaugurated in Bushenyi District on 20th October 2022. The Guest of Honour was Mr. Basajjabalaba, the LC. V Chairman of Bushenyi District. Every stakeholder present was excited about this project and

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FHRI PAYS COURTESY CALL ON THE PRINCIPAL JUDGE OF UGANDA, DR. FLAVIAN ZEIJA



FHRI pays courtesy call on the Principal Judge, His Lordship. Flavian Zeija at the High Court of Uganda Chambers on 25th January 2022. Front row: L-R: Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, FHRI's Executive Director; Dr. Flavian Zeija, Principal Judge of Uganda; Ms. Sheila Muwanga, Deputy Executive Director—Programmes; Back row: L-R: Ms. Solome Nagadya, Ag. Director, Legal Services Division and Ms. Connie Numbi, Project Manager, Civic Education/Death Penalty Project.

On 25th January, 2022, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) team led by the Executive Director, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana paid a courtesy call on the Principal Judge of Uganda, Dr. Flavian Zeija at the High Court of Uganda.

The visit formed the basis of a meeting with the Principal Judge of Uganda, who acknowledged the work done by FHRI. He noted that he used to receive students from Drake University while he was Head of Programs at Makerere University Business School (MUBS). During that time, he did not only follow FHRI but also used to send MUBS student interns to FHRI to acquire more knowledge and exposure until his last visit in 2015 before he joined the Judiciary.

In his speech, he took note of the important role of a watch dog that the civil society undertakes. He noted that based on this background, his office would work with FHRI on several issues such as conducting human rights trainings for judicial officers.

Dr. Sewanyana thanked the Principal Judge for accepting to meet the FHRI team. He observed that the courtesy visit was an opportunity to renew FHRI's long-term relationship with the judiciary. He congratulated the Principal Judge upon being appointed to the new office and briefed him about the long-standing relationship FHRI has had with the Judiciary. Dr. Sewanyana listed some of the senior judicial officers FHRI has worked with that included Hon. Justice Benjamin J. Odoki, Hon. Justice Bart Katureebe, Justice James Ogoola, and Justice Yorokamu Bamwine among others.

He briefed him about the campaigns that FHRI undertakes, most especially the Campaign Against the Death Penalty in Uganda. In a nutshell, the discussion focused on what FHRI seeks to do with the Judiciary in support of its work and to explore avenues for other possibilities of mutual cooperation.

He also discussed the 13th Inter University Human Rights Competition which took place in June 2022 at Bishop Stuart University. FHRI requested the Principal Judge to be the Chief Guest at the opening ceremony of the competition to which he agreed. The FHRI team had Ms. Sheila Muwanga, the Deputy Executive Director – Programmes, Ms. Connie Numbi, Project Manager, Civic Education/Death Penalty and Ms. Salome Nagadya, Ag. Director, Legal Services Division in attendance.

STUDENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND HERITAGE STUDIES VISIT FHRI



A cross section of students from the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Makerere University together with Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Executive Director of FHRI after his presentation on 'Role of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) in raising awareness of human rights' at the Human Rights House on 20th July 2022.

On 20th July 2022, FHRI hosted students from the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Makerere University. The undergraduate and graduate students who study human rights led by Ms. Charlotte K. Mafumbo, Ag. Head of Department wanted to understand the role of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) in raising awareness of human rights.

Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the FHRI Executive Director addressed them and talked about the 30 years long journey FHRI has undertaken in the promotion and defence of human rights. He briefed them on the opportunities and challenges that this noble cause presents and assured them that this is a continuous struggle which cannot be borne alone but requires collective effort. He called upon the students to join the human rights movement as they continue to pursue human rights in their studies.

A CSO PERSPECTIVE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN UGANDA FOR THE YEAR 2022 BY

Under its Constitutional mandate, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) monitors the human rights situation in the country and publishes reports on its findings. In so doing, the UHRC also consults with relevant stakeholders to verify and to gather more information in compiling the annual reports before they are presented to the Parliament of Uganda.

UHRC invited Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), to make a presentation on 21st February 2022 on *CSO Perspective of the Human Rights Situation in Uganda for the year 2022: Progress, Challenges and Recommendations*.

The presentation focused on the socio-political context. The assessment was based on the continued threat of COVID-19 pandemic that came with a litany of presidential directives that placed national security and human rights as opposites; the 2021 General elections that were held amidst a climate

of suspicion, fear and tension among the general population; the restrictions on civic and political space especially with the work of activists and civil society groups; restrictions on access to education and health services where most schools experienced a lengthy closure affecting over 15 million school going children; restrictions on access to justice led to overcrowding in detention places due to indiscriminate arrests with very limited legal aid support as well as an under-funded judiciary; and the growing levels of poverty and inequality.

On a positive note, there were a number of steps that government had undertaken to improve the situation and key among them were; the enactment of the Administration of the Judiciary Act, 2020. This paved way for the financial independence of the judiciary. Section 8 of the Public Order Management Act, 2013 was declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Uganda thereby reasserting the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

The above submissions were discussed in the plenary with the Commissioners and recommendations were agreed upon accordingly.

FHRI UPDATES THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN UGANDA

At the invitation of the Office of the Clerk to Parliament of Uganda, FHRI led by Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) made a presentation on the state of human rights and alleged human rights violations in the country since January 2020. Ms. Sheila Muwanga, the Deputy Director-Programmes and Mr. Joshua Kago Mahande of the Legal Services Division were part of the FHRI team in Parliament.

On 15th March 2022, the Foundation joined other stakeholders in updating the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights on the state of human rights and alleged human rights violations in the country. In FHRI's submission were references to alleged torture cases that were handled during the period under review. FHRI also made recommendations in the spirit of constructive engagement.

FHRI team led by Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, FHRI's Executive Director (3rd left) submitting his views on the human rights situation in Uganda particularly on the alleged cases of torture since 2020 before the Human Rights Committee of Parliament on 15th March 2022. Next to him is Ms. Sheila Muwanga, the Deputy Executive Director- Programmes and Mr. Joshua Kago Mahande, Legal Assistant with the Legal Services Division.



FHRI'S 11TH BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTED *continued from page 1.*

opportunity to elect a new Board of Directors and it is held in compliance with Article 6(b) of the FHRI Constitution. The AGM is a platform where members and partners receive progress reports and discuss new developments, exchange views on a number of issues, make resolutions and plan for the future of the organisation.

In this meeting, members reiterated their concern and request for FHRI to open up more upcountry offices in order to extend FHRI services to the indigent and vulnerable in the far districts and on the other hand to ease the work for the legal officers. The suggestion was this time backed up by Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Executive Director in his report where he informed members on the plan underway to open up a Legal Aid Office in Bushenyi District in October 2022.

He reported that FHRI participated in educating the masses by carrying out outreaches in which the advocacy of the death penalty campaign was reinforced. This year, FHRI held the 13th Inter-University Human Rights Competition, in partnership with Bishop Stuart University Mbarara. The event was officiated at the University by the Principal Judge, Dr. Justice Flavian Zeija, Prof. Mauda Kamatenesi Mugisha, the Vice Chancellor, BSU, and Prof. Kenneth Kagame, the Chairperson BSU University Council. Makerere University emerged the overall winner, while Uganda Christian University was 1st runner up and Kampala International University was the 2nd runner up. With respect to the campaign against the death penalty in Uganda, Dr. Sewanyana updated members on the progress made and the forthcoming activities of the campaign. He notified them about the preparations in which FHRI was to host the East African Coalition on the Abolition of the Death Penalty Forum due 6th October, 2022.

Dr. Sewanyana announced the launch of his 2nd book titled **"Human Rights in Uganda: The Illusive Promise."** that would take place soon and invited them to grace the occasion.

DRAKE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS VISIT FHRI



Front row-4th left: Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, FHRI's Executive Director together with students and their lecturers from Drake University, University of Iowa, USA and Makerere University Business School following their Annual Human Rights lecture at the Human Rights House on 23rd May 2022.

With support from Makerere University Business School (MUBS), students from Drake University under the Study Abroad programme visited the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) on 23rd May 2022.

The annual visit is part of the internationalisation effort of MUBS with Drake University in the USA. FHRI has been part of the 13 year old programme. In 2022 the visit was organised under the theme 'Sustainable Development in Sub-Sahara Africa'. Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Executive Director of

the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) and United Nations Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order addressed the students and his main focus was on the state of human rights in Uganda and the different interventions undertaken by human rights organisations like FHRI. The group of 25 students was accompanied by their lecturers.

DR. SEWANYANA ADDRESSES UCU ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY IN UGANDA



Panel of the key speakers at the public lecture on 11th March 2022. (2nd left) is Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, FHRI Executive Director.

Uganda Christian University (UCU) School of Law, and the East Africa Network of University-based Law Clinics (EANULAC) Uganda organised a public lecture under the theme: "The Right to Freedom of Expression and Assembly in Uganda: Are we moving forward or backwards?" The keynote address was made by Dr. Peter D. Mutesasira, the Dean of Law School at UCU. The event that was supported by the American Bar Association, Rule of Law Initiative took place on 11th March 2022 at UCU.

From a Civil Society Perspective Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) was part of a panel that addressed the public that included Mr. Ben Mwine, a media specialist from KFM and a student representative. In his presentation Dr. Sewanyana took note of the various human

rights instruments that promote the freedom of expression and assembly in Uganda at the local, regional and international levels. He underscored what is required of the state for the Ugandans to enjoy this freedom. He noted that law and order, peace and stability are essential for a human rights friendly environment to prevail. He however, remarked that Uganda has experienced a democratic backlash since 2020 due to a marked deterioration in the country's human rights record. Uganda's record was further tested with the continued threat of COVID 19 pandemic, the 2021 General elections, and the restrictions on civic and political space. As a professional with expertise in human rights he concluded his presentation with recommendations. Details of the lecture can be accessed on: https://www.americanbar.org/advocacy/rule_of_law/blog/roli-uganda-freedom-of-expression-dialogue-event/

DR. SEWANYANA AT THE WORKING GROUP MEETING OF THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT, JEDDA SAUDI ARABIA



Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, UN Independent Expert on the Promotion of Democratic and Equitable International Order was a Guest Speaker at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation meeting held in Jedda Saudi Arabia on 19th December 2022. It was a Working Group meeting of the Right to Development at the Secretariat of the International Permanent Human Rights Commission.

Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, (3rd left) together with the delegates at the Working Group meeting of the Right to Development, Jedda Saudi Arabia on 19th December 2022.



RESEARCH DIVISION

FHRI TAKES PART IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MONITORING TOOL FOR PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES

In May 2022, the FHRI Research Team was invited by Justice Access Point (JAP) to participate in the development of a comprehensive tool for the monitoring of public assemblies. After its development, FHRI was also among the various civil society organisations (CSOs) that were trained in the use of the comprehensive and standardized tool for monitoring public assemblies in Uganda on 21st July 2022. The training was concluded with the official launch of the knowledge products i.e. the monitoring tool and pocket size guide book on public assemblies in Uganda.

The monitoring tool and pocket size guide book on public assemblies in Uganda launched on 21st July 2022 will enable the collection of comprehensive data on public assemblies and open the door to possible compilation of national data on the extent to which freedom of assembly is upheld in Uganda. The data collected will aid accountability for violations of the right to protect/ freedom of assembly; and enable advocacy for the reform of the security sector in Uganda.

FHRI CARRIES OUT HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD MISSIONS IN THE COUNTRY

With the support of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) field office in Kampala, FHRI carried out field research missions in the Northern, Eastern, Central and Western regions of the country in the following districts: Arua, Gulu, Kitgum, Lira, Pader, Soroti, Kumi, Serere, Mbale, Tororo, Iganga, Jinja, Kamuli, Luuka, Bugiri, Wakiso, Mukono, Hoima, Buliisa, Kasese, Masaka, Sembabule, Mpigi, Kyotera, Kalungu, Lwengo, Lyatonde, Kampala and Rwenzori districts of Uganda.

The research team was composed of Ms. Omega Kathryn Kasirye, Ms. Amujal Sheila and Ms. Sarah Tauber. The objective of the field missions was to establish human rights violations that occurred during the 2021 general elections as well as the impact COVID-19 had on the exercise. The outcome of the exercise is a report that will be used as an advocacy tool in the meetings with government officials to discuss the findings of the report, raise awareness of the human rights situation during the election period and learn from the mistakes made. The discussions will also help in finding solutions to the violations that ensued during the election period and thereafter provide for a platform to advocate for better ways to handle such situations especially in those areas where the findings of the field research mission are found lacking.

The field missions took place between 16th January and 5th June 2022. The field research mission targeted human rights defenders, journalists, civil society organisations, victims, witnesses, Political Parties who discussed the human rights abuses that characterised the 2021 general elections as well as the impact of COVID-19 on elections .

DE-RADICALIZATION OF YOUTH AND GIVING THE VICTIMS A VOICE

On 18th March 2022, the FHRI research team represented by Ms. Omega Kathryn Kasirye, the Research Assistant attended the meeting on De-radicalization of Youth and Giving Voice to Victims of Terror-related Violence organised by Justice Access Point (JAP). Justice Access Point (JAP) is a local Uganda based NGO supporting the state and non-state actors to develop the capacity for prevention of atrocity crimes. It supports coherent and coordinated networking among the prevention community of practice and hosts the National Alliance for Prevention of Atrocity Crimes in Uganda.

The team shared their views and basic information on a short-term and strategic intervention aimed at contributing to the de-redicalization of the youth survivors of terrorism and counter terrorism. Through narration and memorization of their experiences for accountability and healing in Uganda, the victims showcased the pictures of their injured bodies. In the discussions held, it was proposed that there should be ways of encouraging medical personnel that treat torture victims to come out and provide proper documentation of the cases handled. Some of the cases that would provide information die before litigation and at this point, the medical personnel have the facts but are scared to write actual medical reports on torture or come out to give evidence, making documentation of torture victim cases that have taken the courage to come out and tell their story challenging. If this process, is undertaken, the masses would be educated on the meaning of torture and its effects on the victims.

“YOU TOO CAN BE A VICTIM; STAND UP AGAINST TORTURE”.

In commemoration of the International Day in Support of Torture Victims/Survivors, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) together with the Coalition Against Torture in Uganda (CAT) of which the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) is a member, a number of activities to complement government's continuous efforts to combat the vice in Uganda were organised around the theme *“You too can be a victim; stand up against torture.”*

The commemoration held in June 2022 was special because it marked 35 years since the enactment of the Convention Against Torture in 1987 by the United Nations General Assembly. It is also 10 years since Uganda enacted an anti-torture law; the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act No.3 in September 2012.

The activities held in light of the commemoration focused on ways to advocate for; legal reforms for a torture free environment, the enactment of the Witness Protection Bill 2014, and the enactment of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill among other issues. FHRI was represented by Ms. Amujal Sheila, the Research Assistant during the preparatory meetings that took place on 18th May, 27th May and 1st June 2022.

Key among the advocacy activities that were held by UHRC and CAT are the following:

“YOU TOO CAN BE A VICTIM; STAND UP AGAINST TORTURE” *Continued from Page 5*

- A joint UHRC-CAT UN Day Anti-Torture press release to all media houses, circulated on all online media platforms. - 23rd June 2022
- An informative joint television talk show on NBS TV to specifically highlight the plight of refugees in the context of torture. - 24th June 2022
- Four joint live radio talk shows on radio stations based in Gulu and Kitgum targeting audiences in Northern Uganda.
- Joint Awareness radio spot messages aired on KFM Radio and Radio Simba targeting audiences in Kampala, Greater Kampala and Central regions; and Thembo FM targeting audiences in Northern Uganda.
- A Newspaper supplement on Refugees and Torture published on 27th June 2022.
- A joint Public Dialogue held in Gulu District on 28th June 2022.
- Legal and psycho-socio camps on 29th June 2022 in Gulu and Kayunga on 1st July 2022.
- A Medi-legal and psycho-socio camp held on 14th July 2022 at Old Kampala Primary School.
- Joint online media campaign on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media platforms. The joint hashtag #AntiTortureLaw10 also in use.
- E-Public Dialogue on NBS TV broadcast live on 26th June 2022 was the main commemoration event.

PUBLIC INTEREST LITIGATION AND CASE IDENTIFICATION ON TORTURE TRAINING

On 13th May 2022, Ms. Omega Kathryn Kasirye, the Research Assistant attended the training and strategic meeting organised by the American Bar Association and the Network for Public Interest Litigation (NEPTIL). The meeting focused on the emerging cases of torture in the country, with the overall objective of training a cadre of lawyers skilled in PIL to enforce the rights of victims of torture and to build a network that could be relied on for this purpose. The training was attended by different lawyers and different organisations around the country who discussed different strategies on how torture can be dealt with in the country to reduce such abuses.

PIL has of recent become technical, requiring special skills and strategies to pursue. It is therefore necessary to promote skills and expertise in this area of law. This capacity training was organised to target persons working on torture incidents, both directly and indirectly.

ANALYSING THE STATE OF TORTURE IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF KAMPALA DISTRICT

On 12th and 13th June 2022, the Research Team represented by Ms. Amujal Sheila, Research Assistant, attended a meeting with African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) and other stakeholders to discuss the current state of torture in Uganda. With the many alleged cases of torture in the country, the attendees adopted recommendations that could be implemented in advocating for its prevention. Some of the recommendations include: -

- Emphasis on the importance of professional documentation of torture as this will help when litigating cases of torture.
- Having an awareness campaign on educating the masses on what is torture, where victims can get redress, and its effects on the victims.
- Advocacy for necessary laws and regulations to ensure the full implementation of the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture Act, 2012.
- Proper training of the security personnel on the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture Act, 2012 is done to ensure effective application.

UGANDA'S MEDIA FRATERNITY CELEBRATES MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA

On 3rd May 2022, the Uganda Journalists' Association (UJA), Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Media (UPFM) and Media Internship Centre Uganda joined the media fraternity at both local and international level to celebrate the 30th World Press Freedom Day.

The commemoration was organised under the theme '*Journalism under surveillance' focusing on digital challenges in relation to Media and Press Freedom*. As one of the key note speakers, the UN Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and equitable International Order and Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana talked about *Media and Human Rights in the changing times*.

In his remarks, he challenged journalists to be knowledgeable if they are to critically execute their duties. He noted that free, independent and pluralistic media based on freedom of information and expression is a core element of any functioning democracy. Dr. Sewanyana underscored the importance of freedom of the media in the protection of human rights. During the commemoration 10 people were awarded for their contribution and support towards the development of media in Uganda despite existing challenges.

Other key note speakers included among others, the UNESCO's representative to Uganda Ms. Rose Agony, Vice Chancellor for Victoria University, Dr. Lawrence Muganga, the United States of America (USA) Embassy's spokesperson Mr. Anthony Kujawa, and Mr. Milton Kambula who won the Peace Award, for his outstanding contribution to conflict resolution and promotion of peace.

The function was attended by journalists from various media houses across Uganda; Development Partners; academia; diplomats; politicians; members of the public, business community, Private Sector, and Civil Society Organisations; government officials; members of the security agencies of Uganda among others.

Globally, the 2022 World Press Freedom Day was commemorated under the theme; "Journalism under Digital Siege" and celebrations were held in Punta Del Este- Uruguay while celebrations for the African continent took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).



LEGAL SERVICES DIVISION

FHRI OPENS NEW LEGAL AID OFFICES IN BUSHENYI



Delegates, stakeholders, FHRI Members and Staff of FHRI at the inauguration of FHRI Bushenyi Legal Aid Office on 20th October 2022.

promised to cooperate as they all spoke to the hunger among both the people and law implementors for these services. “This has really come in time as we have been stranded with suspects in Court, not knowing what to do for them because most of them cannot afford legal services,” said the Grade 1 Magistrate.

The FHRI Bushenyi Legal Aid Project aims at enhancing criminal justice reforms in Bushenyi District and greater Bushenyi by ensuring respect for the rights of suspects during pretrial detention, addressing overcrowding in prisons and the dignity/integrity of the offenders. The objectives of the project shall be achieved through carrying out activities like legal representation of the poor and vulnerable suspects, conducting mediation, holding plea bargain sessions, civic awareness, advocacy for legal policy and practice change, alliance building and networking with different human rights stakeholders, conducting legal aid campaigns and many others. This project is intended to benefit the Districts of Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubilizi, Sheema and Buhweju.

A team of 11 staff were recruited and orientation took place from 17th to 20th October 2022. Staff were briefed by different stakeholders particularly from the Justice, Law and Order sector and the district leaders like the Magistrate Grade 1, Chief State Attorney, District Police Commander, District Prisons Commander of both the male and female section, Country Consultant - Legatum and the Community Service Officer. Some of the major issues brought to the attention of staff by these stakeholders included; convicts charged with murder yet should be charged with man slaughter, some convicts with mental issues in prisons, over populated prisons, suspects who cannot afford payment for legal services, ignorance among some law actors about the law, ignorance among the population about their legal rights, under staffing of community service officers thus limiting supervision of community service activities, difficulty in reconciling convicts with the offended, difficulty in tracing sureties for suspects and many others.

On 14th December, 2022 a Quarterly District Roundtable was organised at the Bushenyi Legal Aid Office and it was presided over by Justice Allan Nshimye, the Resident Judge of Mbarara. The meeting whose theme was unlocking the bottlenecks in the criminal justice system in Bushenyi attracted most of the stakeholders most especially those in the justice, law and order sector.

The Legal Aid Project provides free holistic legal services to the poor and vulnerable suspects in society, police cells and prisons. Just like the leaders, the people of Bushenyi welcomed the project with smiles and look forward to an improved service delivery in the criminal justice system in the region. All stakeholders paid their gratitude to LEGATUM for the timely financial support towards this Legal Aid Project in Bushenyi.



Delegates from the Justice, Law & Order Sector and the leadership from Bushenyi and the Greater Bushenyi districts of Mitooma, Rubilizi, Sheema and Buhweju at the 1st Quarterly District Roundtable that took place on 14th December 2022 at the FHRI Bushenyi Legal Aid Office. (Front row, 4th right) Justice Allan Nshimye, the Resident Judge of Mbarara who officiated the meeting.



THE FHRI LEGAL SERVICES DIVISION CONTINUES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Legal Services Division (LSD) is a legal aid service provider arm at the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, with a mission of promoting access to justice for the poor and vulnerable persons in Uganda. With the desire to enhance sustainable access to justice and to advocate for best practices in the administration of justice, the legal aid offices provide a range of services including legal advice, legal representation, drafting documents, mediation, empowerment of clients for self-representation, and consider referrals, as well as follow up on these cases to ensure that clients obtain justice.

From January to December 2022, about 400 clients received legal assistance from LSD which has offices in Kampala, Wakiso, Bushenyi and Kalangala districts. Out of the 276 cases that were handled and closed, the following were the key outcomes of our intervention: 8 judgments were obtained, 4 rulings in favour of our clients, 78 clients were released on bail/bond, and Uganda Shillings 106,100,400/= was recovered on behalf of the clients. At Wakiso office, land cases attended to led to the recovery of 68 pieces of land. As a way of reducing congestion at Sentema Prison, plea bargain was promoted amongst clients where 42 suspects accepted to plead guilty and were committed to community service under the supervision of FHRI out of the 101 cases handled. The following are some of the success stories.

Stand for the Vulnerable

There was a case at Mazinga, a Sub-County of Kalangala District which involved torture of children by denying them food and were being abused physically and verbally by their stepmother, Ms. Namugga Rose especially when she got drunk. Ms. Namugga is the wife to the area Local Council I Chairperson. The community members feared to help the children and failed to report the matter to the local authorities because of Ms. Namugga's relationship with the Chairperson.

With the assistance of a member of the Village Health Team (VHT) Mr. Twahah Bainomugisha, also trained as a Human Rights Defender, the issue was reported at the Police Station. In response, the District Police Commander (DPC) of Kalangala directed for an immediate investigation and arrest of the offender to be conducted. With the police intervention, Ms. Namugga was arrested, and the case was forwarded to Kalangala Chief Magistrate Court for trial.

As a result of the engagements between the probation officer and the office of FHRI, the court ordered that the custody of the children namely Nabulya Shamilah 7yrs and Nakintu Shamim 5yrs be given to their biological mother who had separated with their father Mr. Kintu Juma. The victim was sentenced to prison for 8 months on counts of torture and neglect of children.

Mob Justice is no means to end someone's life



Mr. Sentumbwe Yasin
Munagomba, Human
Rights Lawyer at FHRI

We all deserve a second chance no matter the circumstances under which one must be condemned, the need for room to reflect on the good side of non-condemnation must never leave our veins, lest we never live at peace with ourselves.

This comes with a high cost and the need to balance between individual and society (group's) interests. As a human rights lawyer, one must not condemn while addressing the interest of either party as this negatively affects the judgment. Balancing between these interests in the hardest times is the cornerstone of my success. On 12th April 2022, it was more than a turn for me to balance between my own life and that of the alleged suspected thief of a mobile techno-buttoned phone said Mr. Yasin Sentumbwe.

On that fateful day, the alleged thief grabbed and pocketed a mobile techno-buttoned phone from a stranger.

It is alleged that hardly had the suspect removed the telecom line upon grabbing the mobile phones, the alleged owner drove very fast thereby intercepting him causing him to fall down which alarmed the people around the scene to converge into a mob.

The mob in its wisdom became the judge and prosecutor in its own case, the mob "charged" the alleged suspect of theft and in deed found a case against him but could hardly grant him a chance to be heard. Subsequently the man was found guilty wherein he was convicted of the offence of theft of a mobile phone, without hearing him out. The appropriate sentence to the alleged thief the "mob court" penned down was to suffer death. Under the law, a death sentence must only be confirmed by the Supreme Court, but to my surprise the "mob court" seemed to be exercising powers of the highest court in our land.

The scene of the purported court was just in front of the Human Rights House building at Nsambya where all three human rights organizations housed under it call it their office premises. Whereas their major occupation is to defend human rights, this would be very shameful for such an incident to occur within the vicinity.

As such, I refused to accept the group's interest of depriving me of my conscience of giving every person a second chance and I moved closer to the scene of crime.

Amidst the chanting mob, hardly had I talked to the mob, is when everybody withdrew from beating the alleged thief who was already badly wounded. The charged mob holding stones and sticks now retreated and looked on as the man cried for his dear life under my shield.

My courage attracted a colleague who had feared to face off with the mob and he joined me in condemning and stopping the action. His coming gave me room to immediately contact the Police although in vain as my colleague took guard of the wounded man. We eventually succeeded through a personal contact at Kabalagala Police station who expedited the rescue mission that saved the alleged thief from a mob that had lost its patience. If it was not for FHRI's immediate intervention the mob was getting charged to retreating in their actions.

When the Police Officers arrived, out of fear, everyone disappeared from the scene and left us with the alleged thief and the site was cordoned off. The alleged thief had earlier cried to the mob to be handed over to Police but all was in vain. Before being taken by the Police Officers, in a feeble and terrified voice while handcuffed, the alleged thief knelt and looked me into my eyes and said, "I am now a born again, thank you for saving my life". I was very sure that he was in safe hands. FHRI's intervention gave this man a chance to continue living and saving his life was our success.



The alleged thief after being rescued by FHRI staff from being beaten by the mob.



Bringing back hope to the Community Members of Kalwanga Village

On 28th April 2022, Mr. Katamba Ramadhan, a legal aid team member of the Legal Services Division at FHRI, was called upon by Mr. Akiza Benon the LC.1 Chairperson of Kalwanga village, and Mr. Muhamood Matovu the Area Lands Committee Chairperson, Kalwanga Sub County seeking for his assistance over a 30 year old land dispute involving over 30 persons who had failed to obtain a certificate of title from God is Love Real Property Dealers.

The land in question is approximately 50 acres situate on Block 418 Plot 06 on a Private Mailo land at Kalwanga, Bweyongede, Kalwanga, Kassanda district in the names of God is Love Real property. The Community Members of Kalwanga Village were concerned that God is Love Real Property Dealers had an understanding with them to transfer the ownership of the said land into their names but the Property dealers had not fulfilled their promise. The community members of Kawuka village got concerned but the property dealers claimed that the delay was due to the failure of the Community Members of Kalwanga Village to pull resources to facilitate the transaction in time. Secondly, when they had embarked on the process, they alleged that the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic also set in delaying the transfer process.

The community members were however not satisfied with the speed at which the transfer process was being done and had also lost trust in the Property dealers. It was at this point that the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) was invited by the local leaders to reconcile the two parties with sensitizing them with the necessary information and procedures to follow to overcome the challenge.

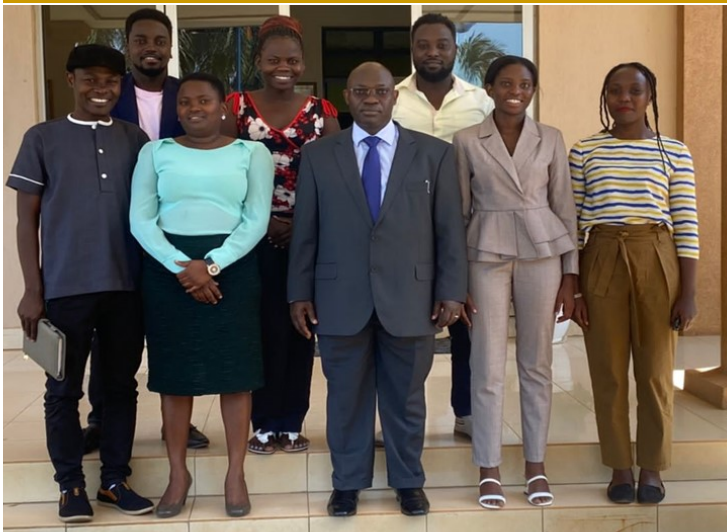
With FHRI's intervention, a meeting was held with all the concerned parties. Several steps were undertaken and agreed upon alongside resolutions on how to handle the matter. 'God is Love Real Property Dealers', the real estate dealers processed the title and the locals were able to smile again. By close of the year, 2022, a consolidated title was secured from the property dealers and was registered in trust from which all the over 30 persons could get their individual titles registered in their names without any encumbrances.

Police Officer charged for abuse of office

The Officer in Charge (OC) of Bubeke Police Post a Sub County in Kalangala District Mr. Okwi Richard tortured Mr. Ssentongo Charles by beating and detaining him in custody for 2 weeks without producing him either before courts of law or being forwarded to the Central Police Station, Kalangala with no clear reason why he had been detained. Through a whistleblower, the FHRI officer was informed about the case.

With FHRI's intervention, the District Police Commander was engaged who promptly acted on the matter and as a result, a criminal offence was instituted against the officer and the torture victim was released on bond.

LEGAL SERVICES DIVISION IN PICTURES



Front row, L– R; Ms. Solome Nagadya—Senior Legal Officer, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana—Executive Director; Ms. Samantha Lubulwa and Ms. Emily Kentengye Legal Interns after their meeting with the Executive Secretary of PANAF and Pearlwood officials at Human Rights House.



Above : Standing in a jacket: FHRI Legal Officer—Mr. Akora Richard chairing a family meeting in Mityana District on the issue of appointment of administrators for an estate.
Below: Five administrators were appointed.



3rd Left: FHRI Legal Officers, Mr. Derrick Fredric Namakajjo and 3rd Right Ms. Samantha Lubulwa meet the leaders of Uganda Musicians Associations and Pearlwood at the National Theatre to discuss how best they can work with FHRI in implementing the PANAF project.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

MAKERERE WINS THE 13TH INTER-UNIVERSITY HUMAN RIGHTS COMPETITION, 2022

Continued from Page 1

Mbarara, where fourteen (14) universities were in attendance namely: Bishop Stuart University, Cavendish University, Uganda Christian University, Kampala International University, Makerere University, Uganda Pentecostal University, Gulu University, Uganda Martyr's University, Kabale University, University of Saint Joseph, Mbarara, Busitema University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Mountains of the Moon University, and Islamic University In Uganda.

At the opening ceremony, we had the honor of hosting the Principal Judge of the High Court of Uganda, His Lordship, Justice Flavian Zeija as the Chief Guest. His Lordship, Justice Flavian Zeija found this event to be an indication of the unwavering commitment to continue with the search for solutions for the challenges that affect the human rights in Uganda. He also acknowledged several challenges that emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic including the lack of resources and hoped that the need to co-exist was drawn from one another.

The Executive Director, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana highlighted the three objectives of the 13th Inter-University Human Rights Competition as follows:

- To promote public understanding and academic research of contemporary human rights' concerns among the youth, more especially within tertiary institutions,
- To foster cooperation between and among the social and geographical divides, overcoming stereotypes, and
- To promote civic values like healthy competition and peaceful co-existence.

Other speakers in attendance included the Vice Chancellor of Bishop Stuart University Prof. Maud Kamatenesi, the Chairperson of the University Council, Mr. Kenneth Kagame, the Academic Registrar, Mr. Aruhu Abdon Rutega and a representative from the alumni. The panel of judges for the competition constituted the Director of Legal Services in Uganda Prisons, Ms. Natukunda Ariyo, Senior Journalist and NBS Frontline Host, Mr. Charles Mwanguhya Mpagi, and Commissioner, Uganda Human Rights Commission, Hon. Jacklet Atuhairu Rwabukurukuru.

All the participating universities had designated topics. They carried out extensive research that was submitted to the panel of judges in advance prior to the 2-day event. These research topics were then presented by the university teams after which each presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session.

The event was concluded with a cultural themed awards dinner in the company of the Deputy Registrar of the High Court of Mbarara, His Worship Samuel Twakirye as the Chief Guest. In his remarks, His Worship Twakirye, emphasized the need for deliberate efforts to join hands and advocate for human rights as a very important issue. Each university was awarded a Certificate of Participation at the 13th Inter-University Human Rights Competition, while each student present was awarded an individual Certificate of Attendance. The judges recognized several categories and declared the following winners.

Best team – Bishop Stuart University who presented on the topic, 'Discuss Death Penalty: A torturous road, and invisible torture'

Smartest Presenter – Aheebwa Rogers from Cavendish University who presented on the topic, 'Doctrine for the Separation of powers: Is it a practical principle in Uganda today?'

Best Presenter – Tabitha Kasse M. from Uganda Christian University who presented on the topic, 'Discuss Death Penalty: A torturous road, and invisible torture'.

Best Research paper – Uganda Christian University

2nd Runner up – Kampala International University who presented on the topic 'Doctrine for the Separation of powers: Is it a practical principle in Uganda today?'

1st Runner up – Uganda Christian University

Makerere University was announced as the overall winner of the 13th Inter-University Human Rights Competition. Makerere debated on whether there is progress or decline regarding the right to freedom of expression and assembly in Uganda.

Below is the list of participating universities and the topics they presented on.

The Right to Self Determination and United Nations Mechanisms: Myth or Reality?	• Uganda Pentecostal University • Gulu University
Regular, free, fair, and inclusive elections in Uganda: Are we learning any lessons from the past?	• Uganda Martyr's University • Kabale University
Doctrine for the Separation of powers: Is it a practical principle in Uganda today?	• Kampala International University • Cavendish University
The Right to Freedom of Expression and Assembly in Uganda: Progress or Decline- Discuss	• University of Saint Joseph, Mbarara • Makerere University
The Oil Promise in Uganda: Is it a threat to human rights or a development opportunity?	• Busitema University • Mbarara University of Science and Technology
Gender Parity is still possible - Discuss	• Mountains of the Moon University
Discuss Death Penalty: A torturous road, an invisible torture.	• Bishop Stuart University • Uganda Christian University Mukono
Human Rights Movement in Post Covid-19 Era in Uganda: Has it entered the End-Times or the Twilight?	• Islamic University in Uganda

PREPARATORY MEETING AT BISHOP STUART UNIVERSITY



A cross section of members from the administration of Bishop Stuart University in Mbarara during the preparatory meeting on 17th February 2022. In the middle is Mr. Elly Kasirye, Project Officer, Civic Education, FHRI

On 17th February, 2022 the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative represented by the Project Officer, Civic Education, Mr. Elly Kasirye, held a preparatory meeting with Bishop Stuart University (BSU) in Mbarara. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of BSU hosting the 13th Inter – University Human Rights Competition.

BSU was represented by heads of departments who included the Dean of Students, Academic Registrar, Dean - Faculty of Law, University Finance Secretary and the Students Leadership.

In the meeting, BSU accepted to host the competition and promised to support some of the budget items towards the event. The date of the event was also agreed upon as 20th and 21st June 2022. The university thanked FHRI for giving them the opportunity and promised to make sure that the event is colourful.

PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE UNIVERSITY CLUB PATRONS AND PRESIDENTS

On 7th April 2022, FHRI held a preparatory meeting for the 13th Inter- University Human Rights Competition. A total of 14 universities were represented at the meeting that took place at the Human Rights House Nsambya. The meeting was attended by the Presidents and Patrons of the universities that were to participate in the competition as hereunder: Busitema University, Gulu University, St. Joseph University Mbarara, Makerere University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Bishop Stuart University, Kabale University, Uganda Christian University, Uganda Pentecostal University, Islamic University in Uganda, Kampala International University, and Cavendish University.

Among the key issues discussed was the selection of topics, expectations of each university and the ground rules to be followed when carrying out the research. Universities selected their topics and the date of submission of the research papers for the chosen topics to be presented was agreed upon. The 13th Inter- University Human Rights Competition was to take place on 20th and 21st June 2022 at Bishop Stuart University, Mbarara.



Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana (Front row, 4th left) with a cross section of the Presidents and Patrons of the Universities that were to participate in the 13th Human Rights Competition that took place at Bishop Stuart University in Mbarara after a preparatory meeting that took place at the Human Rights House, Nsambya, 7th April 2022.

ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY, MBARARA LAUNCHES HUMAN RIGHTS CLUB



L—R: Rev. Fr. Mbyemeire John Patrick, the Deputy Vice Chancellor of St. Joseph University, Mbarara; Mr. Elly Kasirye the Project Officer, Civic Education at FHRI at the launch of the University Human Rights Club on 5th March 2022.

Under her Human Rights Club formed in 2022, St. Joseph University, Mbarara joined the University Students Human Rights Network. The University Human Rights Club was launched on 5th March 2022. The launch was combined with a number of events which included a human rights debate. It was also an opportunity for them to prepare for their participation in the 13th Inter – University Human Rights Competition.

In attendance was Mr. Elly Kasirye, the Project Officer, Civic Education at FHRI. FHRI supports such clubs as a way of motivating them to embrace a human rights culture in the country. The event was also attended by Rev. Fr. Mbyemeire John Patrick, the Deputy Vice Chancellor for the University and other student's leaders.

FHRI AWARDS BEST STUDENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS



Ms. Lekuru Annet receiving the FHRI human rights award from Mr. Elly Kasirye, the FHRI Project Officer, Civic Education during the 28th Graduation Ceremony of Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi on 18th November 2022.

FHRI presented the 4th Human Rights Award to Uganda Martyrs University. On 18th November 2022, FHRI awarded the best student with a Bachelors of Local Governance and Human Rights at Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi during the 28th Graduation Ceremony. The award was given to Ms. Lekuru Annet with a CGPA of 4.20.

FHRI IN-HOUSE INTERNSHIP TRAINING, JULY 2022

The Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), provides internship and volunteer opportunities for students from higher institutions of learning to gain and learn more about her activities through the internship programme.

In 2022, FHRI received over 20 students from both local and international Universities. In July 2022, FHRI under her Programmes Office organized an internship training for 2 weeks. The interns were equipped with different skills and knowledge in basic human rights knowledge, interpersonal skills, lobbying and advocacy, office practice, communication and networking skills among other areas. They were all awarded certificates of attendance. The Executive Director, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana handed over the certificates to the interns as shown in the picture above.



Middle: Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana together with the student interns showing off their certificates from the Internship Training at the Human Rights House, July 2022.

THE DEATH PENALTY CAMPAIGN

COMMEMORATION OF THE 20TH WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY, 2022

Every year, the "World Day Against the Death Penalty" is held on 10th October. In Uganda, the activities are centred on activism regarding the progressive abolition of the death penalty and other cruel, inhumane punishments accorded to convicts. Just like every other year, the World Day Against the Death Penalty in Uganda is commemorated by the Coalition Against the Death penalty in Uganda led by the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI). The annual global theme: "Death Penalty, Road Paved with Torture" was the theme for the 20th World Day Against the Death Penalty that was commemorated at the Human Rights House on 10th October 2022.

Some of the participants who attended the event included children from the SCOPE Foundation, Wells of Hope Ministries, students from Kampala International University and Uganda Christian University; the Wilmat Development Foundation; Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR); members of the East African Coalition on the Death Penalty and many other guests from the East African Countries.

After the arrival of the distinguished guests who included, the Guest of Honour, Hon. Fox Odoi, Member of Parliament, West Budama North Constituency, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, Executive Director of FHRI, and Mr. Hassan Shire, Executive Director of Defend Defenders, the event officially kicked off. Opening remarks were given by Dr. Sewanyana who warmly welcomed all

20TH WORLD DAY AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY – DEATH PENALTY: A ROAD PAVED WITH TORTURE *continued from page 12*



Hon. Fox Odoi giving his remarks during the commemoration of the World Day Against the Death Penalty on 10th October 2022, at the Human Rights House, Nsambya.



Ms. Anne Okutoyi, speaking on behalf of the East African Coalition Against the Death Penalty on 10th October 2022, at the Human Rights House, Nsambya.

the delegates and highlighted the purpose of the event and the importance it holds for the future of the abolition of the death penalty campaign.

Dr. Sewanyana underscored the progress in countries like Burundi, Rwanda, South Africa, Angola, Sierra Leone, and many other African countries on abolishing the death penalty. He went on to question the effectiveness of the death penalty in deterring crimes as crimes are still being committed despite the existence of the death penalty. He reiterated his stance of punishing such individuals/criminals through life imprisonment. In conclusion, Dr. Sewanyana thanked the National Coalition Against the Death Penalty, visiting abolitionists from the East African region, the media who relentlessly created public awareness regarding the campaign towards the progressive abolition of the death penalty, the Parliament of the Republic of Uganda for not shying away from challenging the death penalty sentence, and also the FHRI team who have worked on the abolition of the Death Penalty Project since its inception.

Hon. Fox Odoi, the Chairperson of the Committee of Parliament on Human Rights also gave an account of the functions of the Human Rights Committee under the Parliament of Uganda one of which is to periodically review the state of human rights in Uganda.

As a big win for the activists who have been working to abolish the death penalty in Uganda, Hon. Odoi stated that the Parliament of Uganda had unanimously voted to pass the recommendation on “abolishing the death penalty” from a report that was prepared by the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee. Hon. Odoi quoted Dr. Sewanyana’s remarks that “the death penalty is a premeditated murder” and noted that the state should therefore not decide on the fate of an individual’s life. He concluded his remarks by urging the young generation not to accept the death penalty in their country’s penal laws.

Represented by Ms. Anne Okutoyi from Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the East African Coalition Against the Death Penalty presented its

resolutions towards the abolition of the death penalty in the region and these include but not limited;

- Embark on public sensitization,
- Share and learn progressive jurisprudence in different countries,
- Ratification of legal instruments to abolish the death penalty.

Ms. Okutoyi noted that there is a need for more research and data on the issue of the death penalty in the region in order to demonstrate progress, and using such findings to advocate for the total abolition of the death penalty in the region and beyond.

IPSOS, a research company commissioned by FHRI to conduct an opinion survey on death penalty in 2022, also presented the findings of the survey to the members present. The Director of IPSOS, Dr. Margaret Nampiiima briefly explained her institution’s role in conducting research and preparing the report on the death penalty in Uganda. The research conducted was qualitative and it was based on a small sample that attracted 64 members of the public i.e. both from the rural and urban centres, and the districts of Gulu, Bushenyi, Lira, Jinja, and Wakiso. Several stakeholders were interviewed including Members of Parliament, religious leaders, academia etc. In sharing her findings she noted that there is a challenge when discussing the topic as it is deemed to be a sensitive topic to not only to civil society but to many people. The research that was conducted gauged the public perceptions on the death penalty and the following were the key findings:

- The public had a fair knowledge about the death penalty.
- The public still wanted the death penalty.
- Nobody loves someone who has done such appalling crimes.
- No body misses someone who has committed terrible crimes.
- Death sentences and executions are deeply traumatic for the prisoners family.

Testimonies of personal experiences were given by former death row inmates: Mr. Africa Gabula, Mr. Baale Godfrey, and Ms. Nankya Justine.

Ms. Nankya who stayed at Luzira Prison for 25 years without having committed the alleged crime stated that many people are still in prison without their alleged crimes being properly investigated and asked the President and the Parliament of Uganda to abolish the death penalty. Mr. Baale, a survivor of the death penalty recalled the 14 years’ period in prison and the 8 years as a death row inmate. He stated that many of the death row inmates he came to know while in prison were sentenced to death without even the existence of any evidence of the commission of the crime. Mr. Gabula recalled how he was arrested in 1987 for a crime that he did not commit and stated that numerous inmates he personally knew were innocent but were charged and executed during his stay in prison. Mr. Gabula reiterated his stance on abolishing the death penalty and called for life imprisonment with the possibility of parole.

Besides the commemoration of the World Day Against the Death Penalty, with Ms. Numbi Connie’s attendance, FHRI participated in the 8th World Congress that took place in Germany from 14th to 19th November 2022. Represented by Ms. Connie Numbi, FHRI made a presentation on the death penalty to the 73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) in Banjul - Gambia from 17th to 22nd October 2022.

OBITUARY



EXTENDING THE DEATH PENALTY CAMPAIGN TO THE EAST AFRICAN REGION

In order to promote the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in Uganda and the East African region, a regional meeting organized by the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) was held on 6th October 2022. FHRI hosted members of the Uganda Coalition Against the death Penalty and the East African Coalition Against the Death Penalty at that meeting.

The regional meeting took place in Kampala and among the participants were Sant'Egidio Community in Uganda, Wells of Hope Ministries, former death row inmates, children whose parents were sentenced to death, friends of the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty, Prison Gates Uganda, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, Governance for Africa (Rwanda), Legal and Human Rights Centre (Tanzania), Children Education Society (Tanzania), Tanzania Women Lawyers, and Centre d'Observation des Droits de l'Homme et d'Assistance Sociale (Democratic Republic of Congo).

In his opening remarks, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, the FHRI Executive Director reminded delegates that the International Day for Abolition of the Death Penalty was to be held on 10th October 2022. Special thanks were made to the different stakeholders for their continuous effort in the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in the region. He called upon delegates to share their experiences while furthering the abolition of the death penalty campaign.

With specific reference to the opinion poll survey that was conducted in 2016; that found 56% of the population in Uganda said that it was appropriate to abolish the death penalty, Dr. Sewanyana noted that there are 120 prisoners on death row in Uganda (117 male: 3 female). Although the numbers of the death row inmates have decreased in the past years, people are still being sentenced to death and in the region the numbers are alarming with Kenya having 600, Tanzania over 300, DRC having 2000 prisoners sentenced to death. He concluded by emphasising that the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty is a global matter so we should learn and copy from countries like France, Rwanda, South Africa who abolished the death penalty. He called upon delegates to plan together because there is a need for collective advocacy for the abolition of the death penalty in the region through one voice.

Members from the East African countries presented their situation analysis reports on the death penalty in their countries. Ms. Anne Okutoyi from Kenya National Human Rights Commission and Mr. Martin Mavenjina from Kenya Human Rights Commission presented the report on Kenya. Ms. Haonga Hidayi and Mr. Shilamba Richard presented the situation in Tanzania while Mr. Herve Nsabimana presented the situation report on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The meeting was graced by Mr. Matia Lwanga Bwanika, Chairperson L.C.V. Wakiso District who expressed his appreciation to FHRI for the continuous dialogue on the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty in Uganda. Mr. Lwanga observed that politicians are the actual perpetrators of human rights, and that having representatives within the region sharing and planning together is the best way to campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. The meeting was concluded by adopting a regional strategic plan (2022—2025).

Contact:

Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI),
Human Rights House,
Block 15, Plot 1853, John Kiyungi Road, Nsambya;
P.O. Box 11027 Kampala, Uganda.
Office Tel: +256-414-510263/498; 039-3-266025
Cell: +256-0752-791963
Email: fhri@gmail.ug; externalservices@fhri.or.ug
Website: www.fhri.or.ug; Face book FHRI; Skype: fhri123

THE DEATH PENALTY CAMPAIGN EXTENDED TO LDC AND TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE & CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

On 7th October 2022, a team of 10 members from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo that constituted the East African Coalition Against the Death Penalty visited the Law Development Centre (LDC). Mr. Frank Nigel Othembi, the Director of LDC, together with his team welcomed the representatives who shared their country experiences in promoting the campaign. Mr. Othembi informed the visiting team about the long-time relationship LDC has had with FHRI. He notified them about the interventions and progress made in involving the young generation in the campaign for the abolition of the death penalty. He commended the work of FHRI towards the campaign and beyond.

To him, Uganda should have abolished the death penalty because there have not been executions in a long time, but politics is limiting the whole process. He concluded by noting that LDC is part of the campaign and in so doing, a human rights course was introduced on the syllabus where a topic on death penalty is considered and it is Dr. Sewanyana among others who trains the students.



The East African Coalition Against the Death Penalty Delegation pose with Mr. Frank Nigel Othembi, the Director (Front row; 2nd Left), LDC and his staff at the Law Development Centre, Kampala 7th October 2022.

Later, the team visited Hon. Nobert Mao, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs on 7th October 2022. He welcomed the team and expressed support for the campaign and welcomed the idea of establishing the East African Coalition on the Death Penalty. He committed himself to fronting the abolition of the death penalty sentence in the proposed constitutional review process and informed the team that cabinet will soon establish a cabinet committee on human rights. The cabinet will rely on the support of organisations like FHRI towards achieving that objective. He underscored the need for a national dialogue so that there is peace and reconciliation in the country.



The East African Coalition Against the Death Penalty delegation pose with Hon. Nobert Mao, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs (fifth from the left) at his office on Parliamentary Avenue, Kampala.