

Uganda

Uganda, lying around the north and north-western shores of Lake Victoria, is a predominantly Christian country, with a significant Muslim minority, and a president, Yoweri Museveni, of some 28 years standing. Uganda is member state of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Constitution and government	Education and children's rights	Family, community, society, religious courts and tribunals	Freedom of expression advocacy of humanist values
		<u>Government authorities push a socially conservative, religiously or ideologically inspired agenda, without regard to the rights of those with progressive views</u>	
	<u>Religious schools have powers to discriminate in admissions or employment</u> <u>Religious or ideological instruction is mandatory in at least some public schools (without secular or humanist alternatives)</u>	<u>There is significant social marginalisation of the non-religious or stigma associated with expressing atheism, humanism or secularism</u> <u>Discriminatory prominence is given to religious bodies, traditions or leaders</u>	<u>Expression of core humanist principles on democracy, freedom or human rights is somewhat restricted</u>
<u>Official symbolic deference to religion</u>			

Legend

Constitution and government

The constitution and other laws and policies protect freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as well as freedom of expression, assembly and association. However, in practice the government violates some of these rights, especially the freedom of the press.

There is no state religion, and freedom of worship is constitutionally protected and respected in practice. The law prohibits the creation of political parties based on religion.

Education and children's rights

The religious education curriculum is comparative in theory, but in practice aims at inculcation. There is considerable latitude for schools to offer what amounts to religious instruction (usually Christian or Islamic) with no practicable opt-outs.

There are a small number of Humanist schools operating without impediment (the International

Humanist and Ethical Union and other humanist groups have supported these schools).

Family, community and society

There is little or no interreligious conflict between the Christian majority and the Muslim minority, though 2014 saw a surge in inter-tribal conflict in the western Rwenzori region, reportedly related to historical kingdom boundaries and militant secessionist movements.

<crisis.acleddata.com/an-examination-of-recent-ethnic-violence-in-the-rwenzori-region-of-uganda/>

Churches and businesses named for religious figures and concepts are predominant in the city streets of Kampala. Marriages are often celebrated with traditional "Introductions" followed by a more Western-style wedding ceremony. Several Humanist groups operate quite openly and lawfully, though they are not vocal about irreligious elements of Humanism and focus mainly on education, welfare, and broader human rights work.

An Anti-Pornography Act passed in early 2014, and was widely derided as "muddled", being readable as outlawing not just representation but any sexual behaviours in any context. The law's lead proponent, former Catholic Priest and government Minister for Ethics and Integrity, Simon Lokodo, championed the law on a puritanical religious basis, and said "if a woman is dressed in attire that irritates the mind and excites other people of the opposite sex, you are dressed in wrong attire, so please you should hurry up and go home and change." Women should "dress decently" because "men are so weak that if they saw an indecently dressed woman, they would just jump on her". Shortly after it was passed the Anti-Pornography Law was blamed for inciting a spate of attacks on women wearing miniskirts

<indexonensorship.org/2014/03/porn-bill-uganda/>

Anti-Homosexuality Act passed, ratified and thrown out

In recent years the government including Minister for Ethics Simon Lokodo lobbied to pass an Anti-Homosexuality Bill, citing religious and traditional "moral" grounds for increasing the penalties for gay sex (homosexuality is already illegal). The draft bill received international criticism in its initial stages for proposing a death sentence for what it termed "aggravated homosexuality" (a charge which could be brought in principle simply for multiple incidents of homosexual activity) and earned the nickname "the kill the gays bill". It is not unusual for MPs to tout their religious (in particular Christian) beliefs and many MPs have backed the new anti-homosexuality legislation each time it has been brought before parliament. International human rights groups have condemned the bill at every stage.

The bill was passed by parliament on 20 December 2014. After years of pressure, President Museveni finally signed the bill into law early in February 2014, supposedly after misinterpreting a "scientific" report on the status of homosexuality.

<iheu.org/museveni-set-to-sign-ugandas-anti-gay-bill-based-on-false-reading-of-science/>

<iheu.org/the-anti-gay-law-in-uganda-iheu-analysis/>

However, the law was declared invalid on 1 August 2014 by the Constitutional Court after the speaker was found to have "passed" the bill without quorum in parliament. Supporters of the bill have pledged to bring it back to parliament.

Freedom of expression, advocacy of humanist values

The constitution provides for freedom of speech, but the media have faced substantial, escalating

government restrictions and intimidation in recent years. Freedom of assembly is officially recognized but often restricted in practice.

Highlighted cases

Two leaders of the organization HALEA, **Humanist Association for Leadership Equality and Accountability**, were attacked in 2014 and their offices vandalized and robbed. The HALEA offices were robbed in July. Group member **Joseph Lukyamuzi** was attacked at his home in August 2014, and on 30 October 2014 the director of HALEA, **Kato Mukasa**, suffered an arson attack at his home, all apparently in connection with the rising profile and human rights work of this Humanist organization.

<iheu.org/humanist-group-needs-help-after-robbery/>

<iheu.org/after-attack-on-humanist-leader-take-a-stand/>

Testimonies

“Being a non-religious organisation, what we do has unfortunately attracted hate from several people who now brand us as Satanic, or “un-African”. I have been attacked on Facebook, and during radio appearances I have been abused on air.

... At about 3 am [on 30 October 2014], unidentified persons came to my home, the maid says she heard people moving around the house and trying to open her window and in a few minutes, there was commotion and then there was a bang and the fire started. They set the car ablaze. It is a trying moment to me and my young family, my children are greatly traumatized. Thanks to my good neighbors who came to my rescue and my family was saved. The entire house could have burnt down! I have contacted the police and the ... arson has been reported. ... I will continue working for humanism, doing my job at HALEA more determined than ever. Regardless of the hate and persecutions, our struggle to empower the minds of our people should continue, whether I am around or not.”

— Kato Mukasa