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UGANDA: CONFLICT ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2017

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National Overview

The publication of shocking photos in the national and social media of suspects tortured in police custody has sparked widespread condemnation and a public outcry countrywide.¹ More than twenty (20) suspects arrested over the murder of Assistant Inspector General of Police Andrew Felix Kaweesi in March were allegedly tortured by police operatives at the infamous Nalufenya detention centre in Jinja District. Among those allegedly tortured was the Mayor of Kamwenge Town in western Uganda, Geoffrey Byamukama who had deep septic wounds in his ankles and knees.² Other suspects who appeared in court removed their clothing to display the horrific torture wounds that they had sustained. Many people who have been detained at Nalufenya detention centre have complained about the cruelty they have gone through at the hands of police operatives.³

Several leaders and institutions have come out to condemn the torture acts. The President of Uganda Yoweri Museveni in a letter on May 15th 2017 warned security agents to desist from forced extraction of information from suspects saying it was backward and counter productive and that there is a danger that innocent people are being tortured while others might admit guilt of an offence to be spared of the torture.⁴ The Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda Rebecca Kadaga described the torture as crime against humanity.⁵ Other condemnations have come in from the Uganda Law Society, Civil society Organizations and Religious Leaders.⁶ Amidst the outcry, the Inspector General of Police apologized to Ugandans for the acts of torture by the Uganda police force. Four police officers have since been arrested and arraigned in court for their alleged role in the torture of suspects.⁷

There is fear that torture is being institutionalized within the police force. Reports by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Parliament's Human Rights Committee say that torture by the Uganda police force included plucking of teeth and nails,

¹ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Police-torture-mayor-over-Kaweesi-killing/688334-3923814-mh0036/index.html>

² Ibid

³ <https://www.independent.co.ug/kaweesi-murder-suspects-cry-torture/>

⁴ <https://www.cnbcafrica.com/news/2017/05/17/ugandas-museveni-orders-halt-torture-security-personnel/>

⁵ <http://www.parliament.go.ug/index.php/about-parliament/parliamentary-news/1256-parliament-condemns-torture-demands-nalufenya-closure>

⁶ Daily Monitor, May 17th 2017

⁷ <https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/mps-kayihura-apology-is-an-admission-of-guilt>

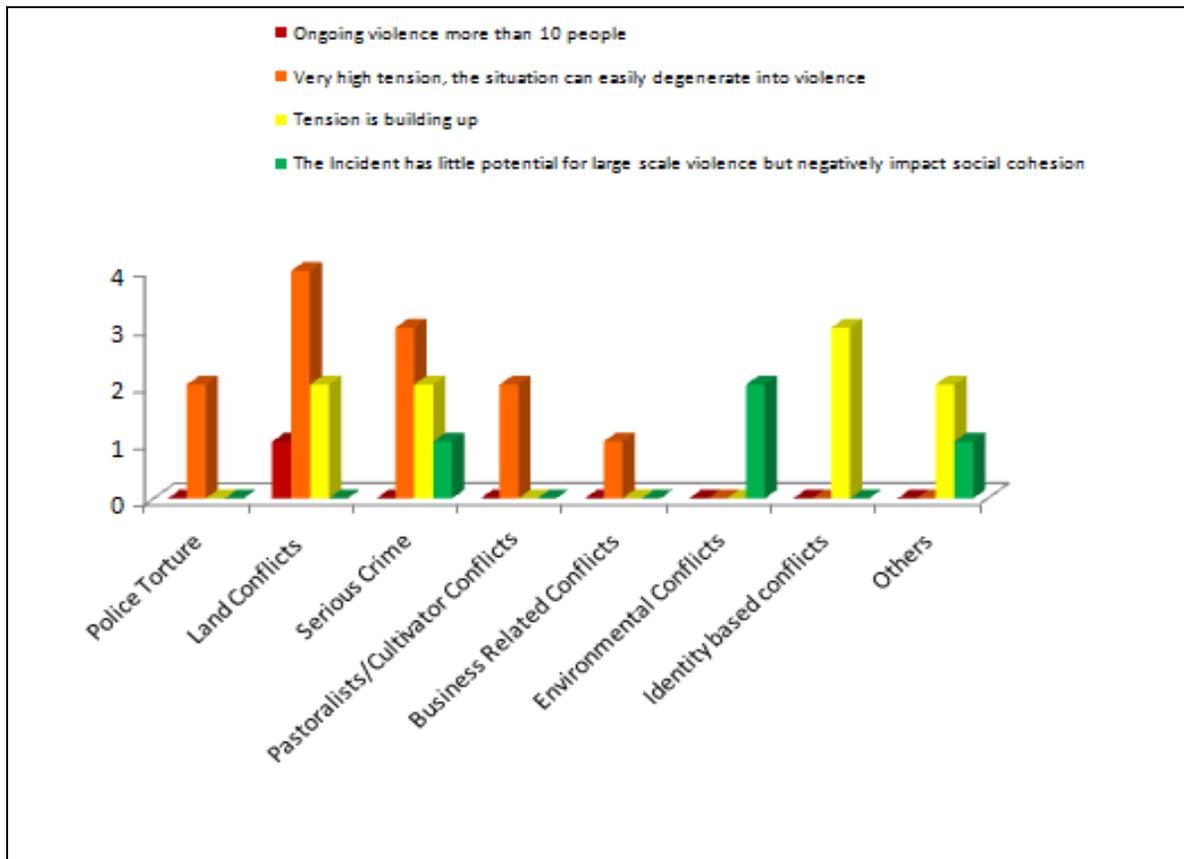
mock execution, administering of electric shocks, being beaten with gun butts, and breaking of knee caps among others.

The torture of the suspects by Uganda police personnel is done despite the fact that Article 24 of the constitution of the Republic of Uganda and section 3 (i) of the prohibition and prevention of Torture Act 2012 says no person shall be subjected to any form of torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment.⁸ The Act imposes up to seven years imprisonment on anyone convicted for torture and makes individual officers liable for commissions in official capacity. Section 10 of the Act holds superiors responsible for tortures committed by subordinates if the supervisor knew or consciously disregarded information which clearly indicated that the subordinate was committing or about to commit an act of torture.

Without effective monitoring mechanisms, torture and ill-treatment in detention centres will persist. The prohibition of torture is absolute and torture can never be justified in any circumstance. GOU must therefore take concrete steps towards eradicating torture. It is imperative that the police force should transparently investigate all torture incidents and take appropriate action against those officers found guilty of torture.

⁸ Uganda Constitution (1995)

Below: Number of Reported Conflict Incidents, May 2017



Source: SAFE Conflict Monitoring Database: May 2017

Regional Overview

Northern Region

The increased crime rate in the Acholi sub region is leading to heightened tension in the region. Gulu Municipality in particular has recently seen a rise in crimes in which assailants commonly known as “iron bar hit men” strike residents either early in the morning or in the wee hours of the night.⁹ A number of people have also been killed during the attacks including the deputy Town Clerk of Gulu Municipality John Oola who was stabbed to death. The deputy town clerk’s death has sparked off fear and fury among residents of the district who are blaming police for not doing enough to maintain security and keep law and order.

⁹ USAID SAFE Conflict Monitor-Gulu District

The Inspector General of Police Chief General Kale Kayihura has now set up camp in Gulu district following the deteriorating security situation in the area amidst public anger.

The army has also beefed up the security of the district by joining in police night foot patrols. So far over fifty (50) suspected hit men have been arrested although tension and fear remain high.¹⁰ District officials believe that the increased crime rate is due to the failure by Government of Uganda (GOU) to disarm and economically empower former Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) combatants. However the ex-combatants deny claims that they are linked to the current insecurity and that none of the suspects arrested so far are ex-combatants. The Acholi region is recovering from the vagaries of the LRA war and such incidents might hinder reconciliation and peace building and cause further tension.

In Arua District, tribal clashes over land have led to eleven (11) people being shot with bows and arrows.¹¹ A group of people of the Maraju-Angazi clan in Walaka village clashed with those of the Asivu clan in Engaa village after they were found planting crops in the disputed piece of land. This is a long standing conflict and the High Court sitting in Arua had refused the two clans or any other persons from using the land until the conflict was resolved.¹² Although there are no more reported fights, tension remains very high and there is fear of possible revenge. Land disputes in northern Uganda are threatening peace in the region as they have become both a source and driver of conflict among different communities. Land is an significant economic asset and source of livelihood which is closely linked to community identity, history and culture. Communities therefore can readily mobilize around land issues making land a central object of conflict. Community leaders need to take a proactive lead to ensure growing tensions over land are resolved to prevent violent attacks, mob justice and revenge acts. The GOU and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) should also train communities on managing tensions over land.

¹⁰ USAID SAFE Mobile Coordinator-Northern Region

¹¹ USAID SAFE Conflict Monitor-Arua District.

¹² Ibid

Western Region

Tension is high in the Bunyoro sub region following the dissemination of sectarian and inflammatory audio recordings airing on local radio stations calling for the poisoning of people of the Banyoro ethnic group.¹³ This has reignited fresh ethnic tension in the oil-rich region between the indigenous Banyoro and the migrant Bakiga settlers. In the audio recording, a man speaking the Rukiga dialect is heard urging his community to get ready to defend themselves against alleged plans by Banyoro to attack them. The plan involves using women to lure the Banyoro men and later poison them.¹⁴ The recording has also been making rounds on social media groups like facebook and Whatsapp. Audio recordings disseminated on radio and other social media platforms can have a mass effect if used to incite hatred of others. The two ethnic groups have been conflicting over land and political positions for many years. The Banyoro accuse the Bakiga of plotting to rule and dominate them through tribal voting and taking their land. The migration of Bakiga into the Bunyoro region has created pressure on the available land and fuelled ethnic conflict. It was the GOU that initially carried out resettlement of some Bakiga from Kigezi to Bunyoro to ease population pressure on Kigezi.¹⁵ Police should thoroughly investigate the people behind these recordings and bring them to book. Police has been heavily deployed in the area to thwart any possible violence.

Eastern Region

Inter district boundary wrangles in the eastern part of Uganda are on the rise mostly among the people living on the boundaries of Budaka and Butaleja, Tororo and Butaleja, Mbale and Butaleja, Bukwo and Kween, Pallisa and Bukedea districts. The SAFE program has continuously written about these conflicts in various monthly conflicts assessment reports. Despite interventions from GOU the conflicts have continued to rise and have on several occasions turned fatal.

¹³ USAID SAFE Conflict Monitor-Hoima District

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ http://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1155964/govt-halts-bakiga-kagadi-resettlement

This month, some residents of Budaka attacked their counterparts from Butaleja with machetes when they found them cultivating in a dispute piece of land at the boundary between the two districts.¹⁶

The current hotspot is now in Tororo district where some members of the community (Iteso ethnic group) want a new district carved out of Tororo district and to be based on the 1947 colonial boundaries that includes the Tororo municipality while other members of the community (Japadhola ethnic group) are against the take over of the municipality as the district is created. There is fear that once the new district is created, it will create boundary conflicts and lead to the ethnic groups clashing. Tension is so high that By-elections for the Local Council (LC5) chairperson seat that were to be held this month have been postponed till further notice for fear of an outbreak of violence.

Central Region

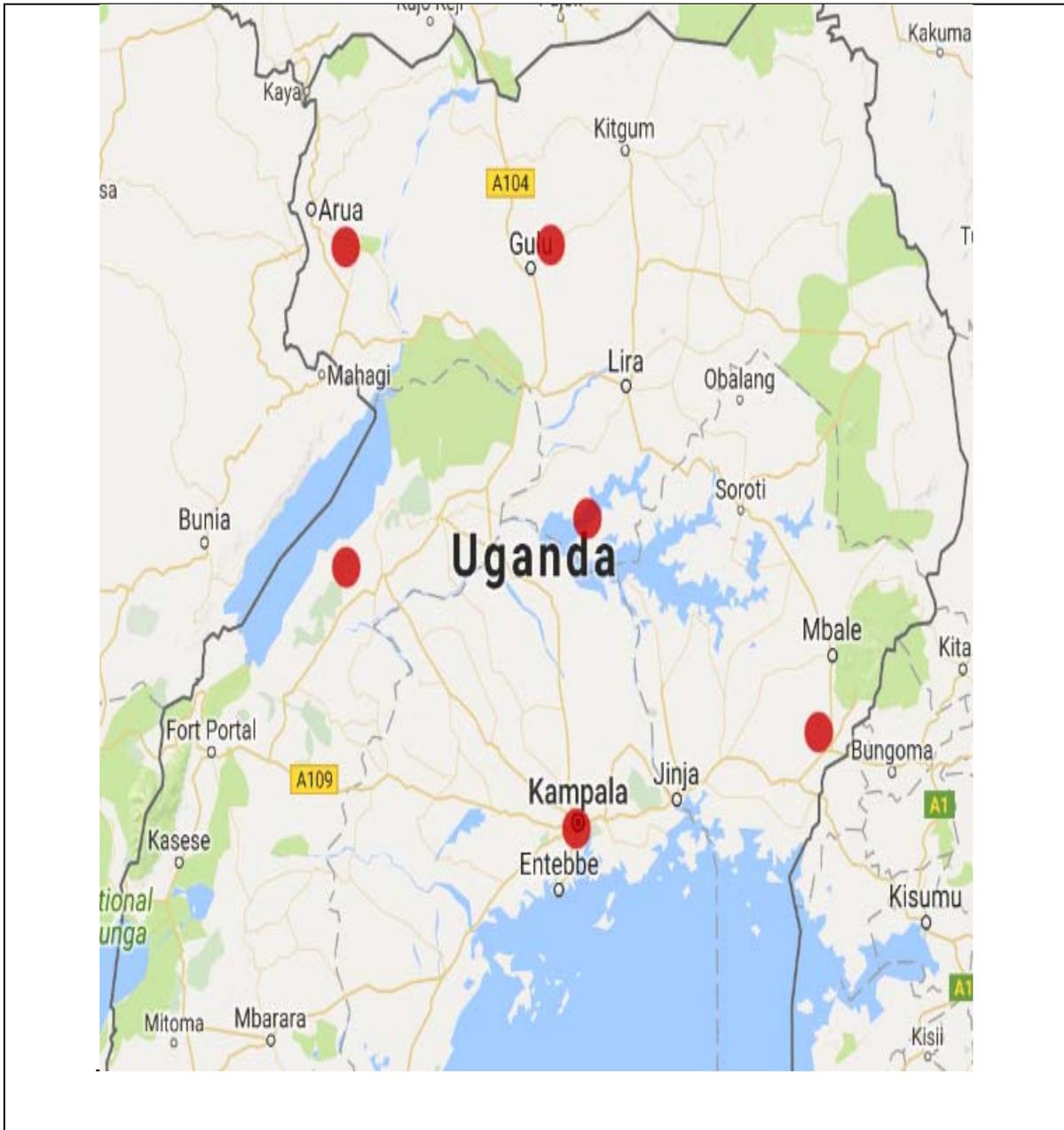
In the central business district of the capital city Kampala, tension is rising between local traders mainly in Nakasero, Kiyembe and Kikuubo markets and foreign petty traders who are primarily from India and China.¹⁷ The local traders accuse the foreign traders of competing with them and engaging in unfair trade practices such as selling substandard products at very low prices, driving local traders out of business and of not paying taxes. The local traders have in the last two months engaged in sit down strikes in protest against the influx of petty foreign traders. They accuse GOU of not confining foreigners to high-end or capital intensive business ventures and investments. GOU says the foreigners are free to engage in any kind of trade as long as they fulfill licensing requirements under the trade licensing Act Cap 101.¹⁸ It is believed that there are more than one thousand and five hundred (1500) foreigners engaged in petty trade in the city. Because of the current hostility, the foreign traders have begun trading by proxy in order not to be recognized. It is vital that the GOU, the Ministry of trade and the Uganda investment Authority (UIA) tighten laws on issuing of trade licenses to foreigners and regulating the trade they can invest in, and to monitor their activities.

¹⁶ USAID SAFE Conflict Monitor-Butaleja District

¹⁷ <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/-traders-foreigners-retail-business-Kampala-Monitor/688334-3875368-13cu9gh/index.html>

¹⁸ Uganda Constitution (1995)

Map of Uganda Showing The Conflict Hotspots As Highlighted
In This Report



Source: <https://conflictmappinguganda.crowdmap.com/>

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