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## **Why did Uganda suspend 54 faith-based and aid groups backed by the West?**

By John Semakula

Religion Unplugged (10.09.2021) - <https://bit.ly/2XeclZg> -The government of Uganda has suspended **54 religious and humanitarian organizations** working in the Christian-majority country in a clampdown widely seen as politically motivated.

Western countries denounced Uganda's 2021 presidential election as unfair earlier this year. Some of the affected local and international nonprofit organizations are funded by the U.S., the EU and other Western donors. And some of the now-suspended organizations supported and openly campaigned for candidates opposing President Yoweri Museveni.

Pastor Michael Kyazze, the founder of Omega Healing Center in Kampala, told *ReligionUnplugged.com* that the suspension does not come as a surprise to him because from the onset, the conditions that the current government installed for nongovernmental organizations to legally register themselves signaled that they were seen as a threat.

"The registration process requires NGOs to go through security agencies, such as the Internal Security Organization, to vet them," he said. "If NGOs don't serve government's interests, they will be targeted."

Uganda's National Bureau for Nongovernmental Organizations, the body that supervises religious and humanitarian organizations, said in a [statement](#) on Aug. 20 that it had discovered 54 organizations were noncompliant with a 2016 law.

"The Bureau has established that 23 NGOs were operating with expired permits, while 15 others had failed to file returns and audited books of accounts," the statement read.

The bureau accused another 16 organizations of operating without a registration permit.

The suspended organizations operate from a variety of secular and religious backgrounds, including Amnesty International, Adoration Ministries, the Islamic Daawah and Orphanage Foundation, the St. Francis Foundation for the Poor, the Liberty International Foundation, Ray of Hope International Uganda, Jesus Shines

Youth Ministries International and the Wanyange Child Support Foundation. Most of these organizations have been supporting the poor, such as widows and orphans, as high unemployment and spikes in poverty have been felt during COVID-19 lockdowns.

### **Some churches backed the president's rival**

Museveni's administration has said it fears that some of the organizations whose activities were suspended were being used by Western countries and other groups to channel funds to opposition political parties in Uganda. The president has also accused some Muslim groups of funding Allied Democratic Forces rebels based in the neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The government accused the Roman Catholic Church in particular of supporting the main opposition presidential candidate, Robert Kyagulanyi, known as Bobi Wine, in Uganda's Jan. 14 presidential election. Some Catholic priests openly campaigned for Wine, a pop star-turned-politician.

Museveni [won the election](#) with about 59% of the votes cast over Wine's 35%. Wine, however, rejected the outcome of the election.

Wine's political party won most of the parliamentary seats from central Uganda. Among the politicians who lost in central Uganda was Museveni's pick for vice president, Edward Ssekandi. After Ssekandi's loss, Museveni was forced to choose a new vice president.

The U.S., EU and other Western election observers concluded that the election did not meet the global standard for a free and fair democratic exercise. Among their reasons: The Ugandan government [arrested and deported](#) several Western journalists ahead of the election day, and at least 10 journalists described being beaten by security forces at a campaign rally for Wine, according to Human Rights Watch.

### **Defunding other development aid**

In February, the newly elected government [suspended the Democratic Governance Facility](#), a consortium of Western donors with a basket fund of more than \$138 million in development aid for Uganda. The suspension affected activities of more than 70 organizations, including many faith-based aid organizations.

Late last year, ahead of the general election, the government froze the accounts of two key civil society organizations in the country: the National NGO Forum, an umbrella body of over 650 organizations, and the Uganda Women's Network, an entity that brings together 20 women's rights organizations. Both were accused of money laundering and funding subversive activities.

In 2017, Ugandan police raided the offices of ActionAid Uganda, the Uhuru Institute for Social Development and the Great Lakes Institute of Strategic Studies, seizing documents, computers and cell phones of employees before freezing the organizations' bank accounts.

Police accused the three organizations of money laundering. They were temporarily shut down, but the government's efforts to prosecute them has stalled due to lack of evidence.

Among the humanitarian organizations whose activities have been suspended indefinitely are those that monitored the election polls. They include the Citizens Platforms for Democracy and Accountability, Citizens Election Watch and Chapter Four Uganda.

Nicholas Opiyo, the executive director of Chapter Four Uganda, told *ReligionUnplugged.com* that the decision to suspend his organization based on allegations that it failed to file annual returns lacked truth and was unlawful, unjust and full of malice.

He said Chapter Four Uganda had filed its returns up to January 2020 and that its efforts to file returns for the past year were sabotaged by the NGO Bureau, which in September 2020 declined to receive the files. He also said the organization has tried to engage the NGO Bureau to meet and resolve the impasse, but the supervising agency has declined to meet with them.

"We have now petitioned the minister of internal affairs to intervene in the matter. If that route fails, we shall seek legal redress," Opiyo said.

### **Organizations say harassment and intimidation is increasing**

The group of 54 international organizations have argued that the suspension has intensified intimidation and harassment of civil society organizations in Uganda. The group has called for dialogue between the affected organizations and the government.

"The suspension is intended to restrict rights to freedom and association and stop the activities of independent civil society organizations that are perceived as critical of the authorities," read a [joint statement](#) by the affected entities, including Amnesty International, ActionAid International Africa, Change Tanzania, Chapter One Foundation Zambia, the Civil Society Reference Group, the Ethiopian Human Rights Defenders Center, Advocacy Network for Africa, the Campaign for Good Governance and Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform of Liberia.

These organizations have advised the Ugandan government to stick to articles 9 and 10 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which guarantee freedom of expression and association.

"Many of the organizations that are affected work in critical areas, such as legal practice to help the poor or the marginalized," they said. "Others work on accountability and transparency in the oil sector and some monitor human rights in the context of the elections. To shut down organizations working so closely with Ugandans abruptly will hurt people who rely on their services or advocacy."

On the day the suspensions were announced, Wine condemned the closure of the organizations, observing that the decision has had a chilling effect on the legitimate exercise of citizens' constitutional right to participate in the affairs of their government.

"Most of the affected organisations ... have been working to deepen constitutionalism, democracy, human rights, and public accountability in our country," he wrote [on social media](#), adding, "I stand in solidarity with you my fellow citizens in the civil society during this trying moment."

The EU in Uganda [tweeted](#) the same day, saying, "Civil society is a key partner making vital contributions to Uganda's development. We look forward to the resolution of any issues with registration of organizations, so that this important work can continue in the spirit of a genuine partner based on mutual accountability."

*Photo : Germany's ambassador to Uganda, Marthias Schauer, right, chats with the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Uganda, Stephen Kaziimba Mugalu, center, and Uganda Christian University's vice chancellor and associate professor, Aaron Mushengyezi, left, after attending a conference for Anglican Church teachers in Mukono recently. Schauer asked Ugandans to fight for civil liberties. Photo by Samuel Tatambuka.*

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## **Christian pastor killed over outreach to Muslims: 'Today Allah has judged you'**

By Anugrah Kumar

The Christian Post (20.06.2021) - <https://bit.ly/3AtD6Yk> - A radical Muslim has confessed to police in Uganda that he killed a 70-year-old pastor earlier this month because of Allah's word to kill all infidels who mislead Muslims by sharing the Gospel.

The accused, identified as Imam Uthman Olingha, told police he killed Bishop Francis Obo, senior pastor of Mpingire Pentecostal Revival Church Ministries International in Odapako village Mpingire Sub-County, on June 11, Morning Star News [reported](#).

Olingha was one of the Muslim extremists dressed in Islamic attire who stopped Pastor Obo and his wife on their way home from a market at about 8:30 p.m., his wife, Christine Obo, said.

"Olingha openly confessed (to police) that he can't regret that he killed the bishop because he did it in the cause of Allah's word to kill all infidels who mislead Muslims. He added that Allah will be with him in jail, but the *kafiri* (infidel) deserved the killing."

One of the attackers told the pastor, who oversaw 17 churches across the region and had been sharing Christ with Muslims, that he was an "infidel" who caused Muslims to leave Islam and "blasphemes the words of Allah," and that, "Today Allah has judged you."

A week before the murder, the couple had invited a former Islamic teacher to testify on how he became a Christian at their church, Christine Obo recalled. Area Muslims were also upset with the church because it offered the former Islamic teacher a pig as part of a micro-enterprise livestock project that helped raise funds for the church, she added.

Describing the incident, she said, "As I moved a few meters in a hurry trying to save my life, I heard a little noise and wailing from my husband and realized that his life was in danger."

When she reached home, she was trembling and unable to speak, she said, and her children took her to a hospital. When she regained consciousness the following morning, she told her oldest son and his siblings to go to the site.

"Reaching there, they were shocked and fearful as they found a big number of Christians and relatives gathered around the dead body mourning their bishop after being murdered by Muslims," Obo was quoted as saying.

According to [World Watch Monitor](#), a homegrown Islamist rebel movement organizing in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo has emboldened Ugandan radicals to persecute Christians.

Voice of the Martyrs earlier [noted](#) that Uganda's history has made it vulnerable to the influence of Islam as "Arab countries also continue to invest significant resources into furthering Muslim interests in the country."

In Uganda, persecution is mainly seen in the form of local Islamists persecuting Christians, mostly in areas where "radicals have been steadily encroaching."

"Radical Islam's influence has grown steadily, and many Christians within the majority-Muslim border regions are facing severe persecution, especially those who convert from Islam," a Voice of the Martyrs [factsheet](#) explains. "Despite the risks, evangelical churches in Uganda have responded by reaching out to their neighbors; many churches are training leaders how to share the Gospel with Muslims and care for those who are persecuted after they become Christians."

Last December, a mob of Muslim extremists in Uganda [reportedly](#) killed 41-year-old former imam Yusuf Kintu a week after he converted to Christianity.

Photo: A follower of the Holy Spirit Movement church performs rituals at a shrine in Gulu town, north of Uganda capital Kampala February 15, 2015. | Reuters/James Akena

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## **Muslim father beats and poisons daughter for converting**

***Muslim father beats, poisons daughter for putting faith in Christ after 'miraculous healing'***

By Anugrah Kumar

The Christian Post (03.07.2021) - <https://bit.ly/3dLOa9A> - A 38-year-old mother of three is recovering in a hospital in eastern Uganda after her Muslim father and other relatives attacked her with a blunt object and forced her to drink poison in her pastor's house, where she had been taking refuge since her conversion to Christianity following a "miraculous healing."

The father of the woman, identified as Hajat Habiiba Namuwaya from Namakoko village in Nangonde Sub-County of Namutumba District, and her other relatives arrived at her

pastor's home on the morning of June 20, the victim recalled from her hospital bed, according to [Morning Star News](#).

"He started beating and torturing me with a blunt object, inflicting bruises on my back, chest and legs, and finally forced me to drink poison, which I tried to resist but swallowed a little of it," Namuwaya, a former Islamic teacher, was quoted as saying.

"My father, Al-Hajji Mansuru Kiita, recited many Quranic verses cursing and denouncing me as no longer one of the family members," she added.

The pastor's neighbors heard her cries for help and that's when the Muslim relatives fled the scene.

"The pastor was not around when the attackers arrived, but a neighbor telephoned him," said Namuwaya, who accepted Christ in February. "He feared to come immediately but later came and found me fighting for my life. I was rushed to the nearby clinic for first aid, and later I was taken to another place for treatment and prayers."

She said she was "restless with continuous pain in my stomach."

The victim has found shelter at an undisclosed site and has not filed a police complaint, fearing retaliation from her relatives, including the possibility that they might file a false case against her or the church.

Namuwaya put her faith in Christ on Feb. 24 after the pastor prayed for her and reportedly healed her from breast cancer.

"My mother warned me that the family was planning to kill me," she was quoted as saying. "I shared my fears with the pastor, and the pastor together with his family accepted to host me, and freely I openly shared my new life in Christ with friends on WhatsApp, which landed me in trouble."

A text message about her staying at the pastor's home reached her father, who then mobilized other relatives to track her down.

While most people in Uganda are Christian, some eastern and central regions have higher concentrations of Muslims.

The Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project shows that about 11.5% of Uganda's population is Muslim. Muslims in Uganda are primarily Sunni. The murder of and attacks on converts are not uncommon in the region.

"Radical Islam's influence has grown steadily, and many Christians within the majority-Muslim border regions are facing severe persecution, especially those who convert from Islam," a Voice of the Martyrs [factsheet](#) explains.

"Despite the risks, evangelical churches in Uganda have responded by reaching out to their neighbors; many churches are training leaders how to share the Gospel with Muslims and care for those who are persecuted after they become Christians."

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Photo : A church bell hangs from a tree branch outside a Catholic church and a school in Odek village, Uganda. | REUTERS/JAMES AKENA

