

Ugandan journalists targeted during Entebbe march

NEW YORK: Security and military personnel attacked local and foreign journalists and confiscated their equipment on Thursday, 12 May 2011, as they covered the return of opposition leader Kizza Besigye to Uganda. Besigye returned to Uganda on Thursday from Nairobi, where he was treated for injuries received when security forces assaulted him and his colleagues during demonstrations on 28 April in Kampala.



Crowds of Besigye's supporters marched with him in a nine-hour procession from Entebbe airport to the Nsambya park in Kampala. Besigye had returned to protest Thursday's swearing-in ceremony of incumbent President Yoweri Museveni. Rumors that Besigye would be returning to Kampala provoked a mass deployment of military, security forces, and police around the Kabuye roundabout, local and foreign journalists told CPJ. Military police and other security personnel beat journalists with sticks and gun butts as they took photos of them indiscriminately attacking Besigye supporters, local journalists told CPJ.

"Ugandan authorities are becoming increasingly hostile toward the press, even accusing the media of siding with the opposition," CPJ East Africa consultant Tom Rhodes said. "The government must thoroughly investigate these brutal attacks against the press and ensure all equipment confiscated from journalists during the attacks is returned immediately."

Authorities pulled journalists out of a truck belonging to the state-owned daily *New Vision* newspaper and beat them, local journalists said. Authorities severely beat reporter Raymond Abbare from the independent weekly *Razor* newspaper on the back of the head, editor Robert Mukasa told CPJ. Abbare received medical treatment and has reported the assault to the police. At least six other journalists who had been riding in the truck - from the *New Vision*, the independent *Daily Monitor*, the private weekly *Red Pepper*, and the private Wavah Broadcasting Service - were assaulted, according to local journalists. All received minor injuries but were discharged after treatment.

Other journalists assaulted include reporter Patrick Ogwango from the vernacular weekly newspaper *Rupiny* and Yusuf Kavuma, a photojournalist for *Sky Magazine*, local journalists said. Some journalists have now gone into hiding after being tipped off by government sources that they were being accused of maintaining links with Besigye's opposition party, the

Forum for Democratic Change.

Thursday's violence came just two days after Museveni criticised the media at a press conference, accusing them of supporting demonstrations organised by the opposition, according to local reports.

Ugandan journalists have decided to boycott press conferences held by the police and security forces, the Ugandan Human Rights Network for Journalists reported. The boycott will remain in force until the government apologises and returns confiscated cameras and pays the medical bills of injured journalists, the organisation announced at a press conference in Kampala today.

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