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1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

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UGANDA

President Yoweri Museveni, elected to a 5-year term in 1996 under the 1995 Constitution, continued to dominate the Government. He has ruled since 1986 through the National Resistance Movement (NRM), legislatively reorganized and renamed as "The Movement" in 1995. The Constitution provides for a 276-member unicameral parliament and an autonomous, independently elected president. The Constitution formally extended the one-party movement form of government for 5 years and severely restricted political activities. A national referendum on the role of multiple political parties is scheduled for 2000, following a 1-year campaign period. The Parliament acted with increasing independence and assertiveness during the year, although Movement supporters remained in control of the legislative branch. Parliamentarians were elected to 5-year terms in 1996. The 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections were peaceful and orderly, but election conditions, including restrictions on political party activities, led to a flawed election process. The judiciary generally is independent, but is understaffed and weak; the President has extensive legal and extralegal powers.

The Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) is the key security force. The Constitution provides for civilian control of the UPDF, with the President designated as commander in chief. The UPDF was more active, in part due to the continued instability in the north and west but mostly because of the country's involvement in the conflict in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DROC). UPDF soldiers and members of local defense units (LDU's) assist the police in rural areas, although the LDU's continued to operate without a legal mandate. The Internal Security Organization (ISO) remained under the direct authority of the President. Although the ISO primarily is an intelligence-gathering body, its operatives occasionally detained civilians. The Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), under UPDF control, also detained civilians suspected of rebel activity. The police are organized as a national force under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The UPDF, police, LDU's, and the DMI all committed serious human rights abuses.

The economy grew at a rate of approximately 7 percent during the year. Annual gross domestic product is \$330 per capita; foreign economic assistance provides approximately 48 percent of government revenues. The agriculturally based economy continued to rely on coffee as its chief export. Foreign investment slowed amid growing corruption, a troubled macroeconomic reform process, and concerns about regional security in the wake of the country's intervention in the DROC. The privatization process slowed significantly, following a series of mismanagement and corruption scandals that led to parliamentary investigations and to the resignation of the Minister of State in charge of the process in late 1998. The financial sector was shaken badly by mismanagement that led to the closure of several banks and a general loss of depositor confidence. The stock exchange remained severely underutilized.

The Government's human rights record was poor, and there continued to be numerous, serious problems; however, its record improved in a few areas. Movement domination of the political process limited the right of citizens to change their government. Security forces used excessive force, at times resulting in death. Government forces committed or failed to prevent some extrajudicial killings of suspected rebels and civilians. Police, UPDF, LDU, and DMI forces regularly beat and sometimes tortured suspects, often to force confessions. A highly publicized judicial commission of inquiry into police corruption uncovered numerous serious abuses committed by senior officers, resulting in the arrest of several officers on charges of extortion. Prison conditions remained harsh and life-threatening. Members of the security forces sometimes arbitrarily arrested and detained civilians. There were a number of cases in which the Government detained and charged UPDF and LDU members for human rights abuses. Authorities used incommunicado detention and detention in unregistered and unofficial places of remand without notification to family members. Despite measures to improve the discipline and training of security forces, and despite the punishment of some security force officials guilty of abuses, abuses by the security forces remained a problem throughout the country. Prolonged pretrial detention remained a problem. Poor judicial administration, lack of resources, a large case backlog, and lengthy trial delays circumscribed due process and the right to a fair trial. The UPDF at times infringed on citizens' privacy rights; it often invaded citizens' homes without warrants. The Government demonstrated continued respect for freedom of speech and of the press; however, there were some instances in which restrictions continued. The Government restricted freedom of assembly and association, and the constitutional restrictions on political activity effectively limit these rights further. Security forces continued to harass Muslims. There were some limits on freedom of movement. The Movement Secretariat, supported with government funds, oversaw internal organizational activity, strategy, and mobilization, and the Government continued its Movement political education courses. Domestic violence against women, rape, and abuse of children remained serious problems. Discrimination against women, the disabled, and ethnic minorities persisted. The Government worked with NGO's to combat the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), which occurred on a limited basis. Violence against ethnic minorities was a problem. There were some limits on worker rights. Forced labor, including by children, occurred, and child labor was common, mostly in the informal sector. There have been reports of trafficking in persons. Vigilante justice also was a problem.

Insurgent forces committed numerous serious abuses, although on a significantly reduced scale. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group active in the west, killed, tortured, maimed, and abducted many persons, including children. The Lord's Resistance

Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony and supported by the Government of Sudan, operated in the north from bases in southern Sudan. The LRA continued to kill and abduct civilians, including children, although such abuses decreased considerably from the previous year. Rwandan Hutu rebels, the Uganda National Rescue Front-II (UNRF-II), and the Uganda Salvation Front/Army (USF/A) also claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks that resulted in fatalities.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Political and Other Extrajudicial Killing

There were no confirmed reports of politically motivated killings by government forces; however, members of the security forces and the police committed extrajudicial killings. In the course of official operations, police, UPDF, LDU, and DMI personnel sometimes used excessive force, resulting in deaths (see Section 1.g.). In January 15 UPDF soldiers in Kabarole district allegedly killed 5 youths between the ages of 13 and 19. The soldiers were arrested at the end of January, and three of the soldiers appeared in a Kampala court in March on murder charges. Their cases still were pending at year's end, as was an investigation of the other 12 soldiers. In May police shot and killed an unarmed youth after mistaking him for a robber. In July police reportedly beat to death a prisoner in Soroti (see Section 1.c.). There was a report that UPDF soldiers in Kole county, Apac District engaged in murder, torture, and looting in July. The matter was reported to the Minister of Security, but could not be confirmed. In August UPDF soldiers executed two rebel suspects in Lira; a UPDF inquiry is ongoing. On September 9, UPDF troops conducting a pacification campaign in the Karamoja region opened fire on members of two Karamojong clans that were engaged in a gun battle. Reports suggest that hundreds of Karamojong warriors were killed in this incident. There was no investigation into this incident by year's end. On October 10, a man died after having been beaten by the police while in custody the previous day (see Section 1.c.).

Muslim groups complained of extensive mistreatment by security officials in Kampala and in the west. There were unconfirmed reports that some Muslims suspected of being ADF rebel collaborators or involved in terrorist activities died as a result of torture by DMI officials (see Sections 1.c. and 1.d.).

A judicial commission of inquiry into corruption in the police force began operation in May and was ongoing at year's end. During the course of the investigation the commission uncovered incidents of killings, brutality, theft, and robbery by police in general, and by the CID in particular. The commission's proceedings were open to the public and received extensive press coverage. The commission report had not been submitted to the Government by year's end.

Harsh conditions, some intentional mistreatment, and lack of adequate medical treatment caused many deaths in prison (see Section 1.c.).

The LDU commander responsible for the August 1998 death of two civilians in Kyankwanzi while in custody was arrested and remained in detention awaiting trial at year's end.

Police continued investigations into the June 1998 incident in which police fired on students at the Kabalega secondary school, killing one student; into the January 1998 death in police custody after being tortured of a 25-year-old suspect accused of stealing a bicycle in Tororo; and into the August 1998 incident in which a prison official in Masaka beat to death a suspect on remand for defaulting on tax payments. There were no prosecutions in connections with these incidents by year's end. On February 1, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) referred for prosecution the case of three police officers accused of killing four robbery suspects in 1998.

Investigations into the 1997 deaths by torture of Paul Kollo and Stephan Baryakajika were completed, and the government-sponsored UHRC heard the cases. In February the UHRC handed the cases over to the courts for prosecution (see Section 1.c.). A suspect arrested for the 1997 killing of Modesta Kabaranga, a leading organizer for the Democratic Party, still was on remand awaiting trial at year's end. There has not yet been a police investigation in the 1997 killings of Abdullah Buwuula, Mubarek Mawejje, and Amir Sinai at year's end.

The rebel ADF committed at least 350 extrajudicial killings, including that of children (see Section 1.g.). The LRA was responsible for the killing of approximately 30 civilians, including children (see Section 1.g.). Rwandan Hutu rebels were responsible for the killing of 19 persons, including the killings of 9 persons in March in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest park (see Section 1.g.). UNRF-II, USF/A, and the Citizens Army for Multiparty Politics (CAMP) may have been responsible for the death of civilians (see Section 1.g.).

Vigilante justice was a problem (see Sections 1.c. and 5). Authorities rarely prosecuted persons engaged in mob violence, which frequently resulted in death. A police official announced in September that vigilante justice was occurring at a rate of two incidents per day. On January 2, four of eight suspected thieves were lynched when a mob broke into the Nyaburara subcounty jail in Kabarole district. On February 2, a UPDF soldier was lynched in Luwero district after being accused of robbery. On May 25, a suspected thief was burned to death by a mob in Mukono, central Buganda. On August 11, a thief was beaten into a coma by a mob in Kampala after grabbing money from a vehicle.

Urban bombings remained a problem. On February 14, two bomb blasts killed 4 persons and injured 35 others in Kabalagala. On April 11, a bomb exploded at Kampala's old taxi park, killing 3 persons and injuring 13 others. On April 24, a bomb blast injured six persons at a bar in Makindye. On May 7, a bomb exploded in a Kampala marketplace, killing one person. On May 30, a bomb blast in a suburb of Kampala killed three persons and injured nine others. The ADF is suspected of involvement in these bombings.

There was a growing number of reports of ritual murders of children. On February 15, a 2-year-old child was murdered after being kidnaped from his home. His body was found burned and coated with a traditional medicine. On July 23, a traditional healer and his assistant were sentenced to death for the April 4 murder and mutilation of a girl in Mukono district.

b. Disappearance

There were no confirmed reports of politically motivated disappearances due to action by

government forces; however, a number of Muslims whom the authorities suspected of supporting the ADF insurgency still are missing and it is believed that they were detained by security officials (see Section 1.c.).

ADF, LRA, and UNRF-II rebels abducted civilians. Both the ADF and the LRA abducted civilians for training as guerrillas; most victims were children and young adults. NGO's estimated that the ADF abducted over 800 persons, including children. The LRA abducted approximately 250 persons, including young girls abducted as sex and labor slaves (see Sections 6.c. and 6.f.). Amnesty International reported in 1998 that without child abductions, the LRA would have few combatants. While some later escaped or were rescued, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 4,802 children abducted by the LRA since 1987 remain missing, and approximately 100 children abducted by the ADF remain missing (see Section 1.g.). The UNRF-II abducted 56 persons.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The Constitution prohibits "any form of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment"; however, security forces commonly beat and sometimes tortured criminal suspects, often to force confessions. On May 17, a former security guard who was charged with terrorist activity told a Kampala court that he was tortured by the police at Kampala's central police station. UPDF forces in the north on occasion beat and abused civilians, although there were significantly fewer reports of such abuse during the year.

In January a UPDF officer in Jinja tortured a photographer who attempted to take a picture after the officer had pointed his gun at a civilian. The officer subsequently was arrested and detained at Makindye barracks. In February family members found the badly mutilated body of Patrick Ocan, who last was seen in UPDF custody. There was an unconfirmed report that in July UPDF soldiers in Kole county, Apac district, engaged in murder, torture, and looting (see Section 1.a.). On October 9, police beat a man while in custody in Buwenge, Jinja District; the man died after being released the following day.

In September antiriot police fired guns to disperse a strike attempt at the Sugar Corporation of Uganda, although there were no reported casualties as a result of police action (see Section 6.a.).

The police occasionally treat criminal suspects in an inhuman and degrading manner. On May 11, a newspaper published a picture of a naked woman being shaved forcefully by a group of men in military uniform. Kandida Lakony subsequently claimed that she was the woman in the picture, and that UPDF soldiers in Gulu were responsible. Kandida was arrested in June and charged with giving false information to the police. In highly publicized testimony in August, Kandida alleged that during her detention she was forced to remain naked in a cell for 2 days. During the trial, army officials from the north stated that women regularly are punished at army facilities by having their heads shaved with blunt razors. In October a court rejected Kandida's claims, found her guilty of giving false information to the police, and sentenced her to 12 months' imprisonment. Her case was under appeal at year's end. The newspaper's senior editorial staff was charged with sedition for having printed the story (see Section 2.a.).

Muslim groups complained of extensive mistreatment by security officials in Kampala

and in the west. There were unconfirmed reports that DMI officials tortured some Muslims detainees (see Section 1.a.).

There continued to be unconfirmed reports that UPDF mobile forces regularly beat civilians and raped women (see Section 1.g.).

During the conflict with the LRA, government forces used threats to compel citizens to leave their homes and move to areas under government protection (see Sections 1.f. and 1.g.).

LDU's, which frequently lack training, often mistreat prisoners and detainees. For example, on February 9, two teenaged girls reportedly were raped by two LDU personnel at Kabujogera police post in Fort Portal. The accused were arrested pending a police investigation. In August an LDU member shot and wounded a businessman in Kisenyi, a suburb of Fort Portal. The LDU member reportedly was apprehended and detained by the UPDF.

The Government investigated some cases of abuse, and tried and punished some offenders. In May the Government launched a Judicial Commission of Inquiry into police corruption, which remained ongoing at year's end (see Section 1.a.). The Commission probed a wide range of police abuses, including abuses committed by senior police officials. The inquiry resulted in the arrests of several police officers on charges of abuse, rape, extortion, and robbery including a police officer accused of raping a 16-year-old girl. In September three police officers were arrested on charges of torturing and extorting money from persons in Mbale.

The police Human Rights Desk, established in 1998 received 620 new complaints, including allegations of excessive force, torture, assault, rape, and murder. Of these, 205 cases were resolved, some resulting in disciplinary actions including reductions in rank, fines, halted promotions, and dismissals. A total of 50 cases were referred to the criminal courts.

In conjunction with the UHRC, the police force continued a training program for police officials to foster respect for internationally recognized human rights standards. The UHRC and NGO's conducted similar programs with UPDF officials throughout the year.

The investigations into the 1997 torture of Corporal Twasha Kaushera and the 1997 deaths by torture of Paul Kollo and Stephan Baryakajika were completed, and the cases were heard by the UHRC. In February the Commission handed the cases over to the courts for prosecution (see Section 1.a.). On March 10, the UHRC awarded \$400 (600,000 shillings) to Mary Iripoit for torture, degradation, and deprivation of her personal liberty at the hands of a former ISO officer in Soroti in August 1998.

The ADF continued to maim civilians, and loot and burn private homes. The LRA engaged in looting and destruction of private property. The ADF and LRA also abducted children to be guerrillas and tortured them by beating them, forcing them to witness atrocities, forcing them to march until collapse, and denying them adequate food, water, or shelter (see Section 1.g.).

There were numerous instances in which mobs attacked suspected thieves and other

offenders caught in the commission of crimes (see Section 1.a.). Often motivated by widespread distrust of the justice system, these mobs engaged in stonings, beatings, and other forms of mistreatment, such as tying suspects' wrists and ankles together behind their backs, stripping suspects of their clothes and parading them through the streets, or forcing suspects to hop painfully on the sides of their ankles. Vigilantes also have stripped prostitutes who dress "indecently" or "provocatively."

Urban bombings remained a problem, and resulted in numerous casualties (see Section 1.a.). Bombs were detonated in Iganga, Busia, Ntungamo, Makindye, a new taxi park in Kampala, and a marketplace in Kampala, injuring numerous persons but causing no fatalities. The Uganda Peoples Freedom Movement claimed responsibility for the nonfatal bombing in Iganga, and the USF/A claimed responsibility for the nonfatal bombing in Busia. The ADF is suspected of involvement in the other bombings.

Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. Conditions for the estimated 5,000 inmates in local police cells and in the 162 local prisons particularly were bad. Authority over the local prison system, formerly operated by the Ministry of Local Government, was scheduled to be transferred to the state-funded and operated prison system, run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1998. The transfer had not taken place by year's end due to funding problems and lack of enabling legislation. Both civilian and military prisons have high mortality rates from overcrowding, malnutrition, diseases spread by unsanitary conditions, and HIV/AIDS.

No accurate estimates are available on the number of deaths in detention due to the harsh conditions and lack of medical care, although many such deaths have occurred. The UHRC reported severely inadequate medical services, seriously unhygienic conditions, and a situation of "semi-starvation" among prisoners in many prisons. Of a group of 30 persons arrested for treason in 1986 and held in Luzira prison, 29 have died of various diseases including malaria, meningitis, and cholera. In April a court in Masindi heard that five inmates died in detention. There were no reports of the cause of death. On June 28, Matia Kiwanuka Mulama, an inmate of Buikwe prison in the eastern part of the country, reportedly was found dead after having been tortured by the chief warden. A district police official confirmed reports that Mulama's body was left at Kawolo hospital mortuary with its eyes gouged out (see Section 1.a.). A police investigation was ongoing at year's end.

The harsh conditions largely result from the Government's seriously inadequate funding of prison facilities. Most of the prisons grow maize, millet, and vegetables, although the UHRC accused prison farms of overworking inmates. Prisoners received only \$.0007 (1 shilling) per day for their labor, a rate established in the early 1960's. Prison conditions come closest to meeting minimum international standards in Kampala, where prisons provide medical care, running water, and sanitation; however, these prisons also are among the most overcrowded. By one estimate, the country's prisons--all of which predate independence in 1962--hold about three times their maximum planned capacity. Human rights groups, including the Uganda Law Reform Commission and the Uganda Prisoners Aid Foundation, continued to call for expanded noncustodial sentencing--an effort generally blocked by strongly punitive attitudes among judges, in part motivated by fear of accusations of corruption if prisoners appear to be treated leniently. Although the law provides for access to prisoners by their families, ignorance of this right and fear of prison authorities often limit family visits. The UHRC reported that it had received allegations

that officers in charge of police cells sometimes demanded bribes to allow visits.

Women have segregated wings with female staff in most, but not all prisons. According to human rights advocates, rape generally is not a problem, although female prisoners also suffer from severely substandard conditions. Due to lack of space in juvenile facilities, juveniles often are kept in prisons with adults. The central prison system maintains one juvenile prison and four lower security remand homes. School facilities and health clinics in all five institutions are defunct; prisoners as young as age 12 perform manual labor from dawn until dusk. Severe overcrowding also is a problem at juvenile detention facilities and in women's wings. The remand home in Kampala, designed for 45 inmates, holds 120 children.

The central prison system continued to work with NGO's and the donor community to improve prison buildings, water and sanitation systems, food, and uniforms. Progress has been marginal.

Government agencies have sponsored or participated in numerous conferences on the justice system and prison conditions, and worked closely with international and domestic human rights organizations on prison reform efforts.

Media access to prisons remained limited, but the Government permitted full access to prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and local NGO's, principally the UHRC, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, and the Uganda Prisoners' Aid Foundation. UHRC access to prison facilities initially was granted in mid-1997; since that time, the organization has carried out numerous prison visits and reported on its findings publicly. Prison authorities require advance notification of visits, a process that often is subject to administrative delays.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

Members of the security forces at times arrested and detained citizens arbitrarily. According to the Constitution, a suspect must be charged within 48 hours of arrest and be brought to trial or released on bail within 120 days (360 days for a capital offense). If the case has been committed to the court before the expiration of this period, the Constitution does not limit pretrial detention. The Constitution also provides that detainees should be informed immediately of the reasons for their detention; however, in practice the authorities enforced none of these procedural protections. Some laws conflict with the Constitution, for example, the Public Order and Security Act of 1967 (the Detention Order), which provides for unlimited detention without charge; however, these laws never have been invoked formally by the Government. Legal and human rights groups, including the UHRC, sharply criticized the excessive length of detention without trial--in many cases amounting to several years--for alleged offenses under other laws, which both violated the constitutional rights of the detainees and contributed substantially to prison overcrowding.

Arbitrary arrest is a problem. In particular, arbitrary mass arrests known as "panda gari" were conducted following bomb scares. On April 28, UPDF soldiers, LDU personnel, and police arrested 200 persons in Fort Portal following an 8-hour security operation. On May 2, a combined UPDF, LDU, and police force detained approximately 500 persons in Mbarara during a security operation. On July 28, approximately 70 persons were arrested

in Kampala in a joint operation mounted by police and LDU's. Most persons arrested were released within 24 hours.

In September President Museveni called for the arrest of homosexual individuals who engaged in "abominable acts", 2 weeks after a rumored "wedding" between two men. Subsequently, the two men were called in by the police for questioning. Police arrested and detained at least one person during the year because of sexual orientation, although the charges eventually were dismissed.

On October 28, approximately 200 people were arrested by police and ISO officers in Kampala in order to prevent a planned strike by taxi drivers (see Section 6.a.). All were released later.

Police at times harassed and detained journalists and opposition politicians (see sections 2.a. and 3). In January officials detained an opposition Member of Parliament, Wasswa Lule, after he made public remarks suggesting that President Museveni should be investigated for corruption. Lule was released the following day without charge. Also in January, police detained for 48 hours three officials from the Foundation for African Development during a seminar in Moyo district. In November police briefly detained a district chair of the Uganda Young Democrats for campaigning against the multiparty referendum. He was released the following day without charges.

Complaints from Muslim groups regarding arrests targeted at young Muslims on suspicion that they supported rebel groups continued during the year. There were reports that most of the 30 to 40 Muslim men believed to be detained at the end of 1998 were released during the year; however, no details were available.

The rearrest of Muslim suspects following either their release on bail or acquittal was a problem. Following their acquittal on murder charges in June, 28 members of the Islamic Tabliq group were rearrested and charged with the same offense. Another group of 53 treason suspects was granted bail in June but later rearrested and detained.

On June 28, opposition politician Karuhanga Chapaa, arrested in 1998 for remarks made at a public seminar, was convicted of sedition and sentenced to a fine of approximately \$35 (50,000 shillings) (see Section 2.a.).

Although they have no legal authority to make arrests, LDU's continued to arrest citizens on a regular basis.

Pretrial detainees comprise nearly three-fourths of the prison population. The average time in pretrial detention is from 2 to 3 years. Over 10,000 of the 16,000 persons being held in the central prisons are pretrial detainees, and the problem is particularly serious in the local government-run prisons, which hold a total of 6,649 detainees. A census of the central prison population conducted in March indicated that at least one-sixth of the inmates were being detained beyond constitutional limits. Congestion and delay in the legal system have resulted in an increasing number of detainees each year. In November more than 400 prisoners held without trial since at least 1997 staged a protest at Luzira prison in Kampala. The prisoners refused to return to their cells until they received assurances from the director of public prosecutions that their cases would be brought to court.

In September the Human Rights and Peace Center Prisons Project reported that 31 Congolese and Sudanese refugees arrested in March 1997 on suspicion of aiding West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) rebels still had not been charged with a crime (see Section 2.d.). The UHRC heard several cases during the year brought by prisoners challenging the length of their detention. At least one prisoner was awarded monetary compensation for being detained beyond the constitutional limit.

NGO's monitoring prison conditions reported that, unlike in past years, there were no detentions of civilians in military barracks; however, security forces held civilians in unofficial, unregistered places of remand, mostly on suspicion of collusion with rebel groups and participation in terrorist attacks (see Section 1.c.).

The Constitution does not prohibit forced exile; however, the Government does not use exile as a means of political control. A presidential amnesty for former LRA and WNBF rebels was superceded in December when Parliament enacted an amnesty law covering all current and former rebels. In October 146 former UNRF II rebels were released from prison.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, the President has extensive legal and extralegal powers that influence the exercise of this independence. The President nominates, for the approval of Parliament, members of the Judicial Service Commission, which makes recommendations on appointments to the High Court, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court. The courts remained understaffed and weak.

The highest court is the Supreme Court, followed by (in descending order) the Court of Appeal (which also functions as the Constitutional Court for cases of first instance involving constitutional issues), the High Court, the chief magistrate's court, and local council (LC) level three (subcounty) courts, LC level 2 (parish) courts, and LC level 1 (village) courts. A minimum of six justices may sit on the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal or Constitutional Court. In addition there are a few specialized courts that deal with industrial and other matters. The Industrial Court (IC), which arbitrates labor disputes, is structurally parallel to the chief magistrate's court. There is also a military court system.

Although once considered a useful innovation, the LC courts often are thought to be sources of injustice due to such factors as bribery and male dominance in rural areas. The LC courts have authority to settle civil disputes, including land ownership and payment of debts, and criminal cases involving children. These courts, often the only ones available to villagers, frequently exceed their authority by hearing criminal cases, including murder and rape. LC court decisions may be appealed to magistrate's courts, but often there are no records made at the village level, and many defendants are not aware of their right to appeal.

The civilian judicial system contains procedural safeguards, including the granting of bail and the right of appeal to higher courts; however, an inadequate system of judicial administration and a lack of resources, resulting in a serious backlog of cases, have circumscribed the right to a fair trial for many years. The courts, like other branches of government, were impaired by a 4-year civil service hiring freeze, which was relaxed only

somewhat in 1998. As a result, criminal cases may take 2 or more years to reach the courts. The case backlog remains extremely large, in particular, the backlog of criminal cases in the High Court, which has increased every year since 1993. Attorneys working in the Office of the public prosecutor can be assigned several new cases each day. Some courts continued to observe the constitutionally prescribed limits on pretrial detention, but that practice was not widespread.

Many defendants cannot afford legal representation. The Constitution requires that the Government provide an attorney for indigent defendants accused of capital offenses, but there is rarely enough money to retain adequate counsel. The Uganda Law Society (ULS) operates legal aid clinics in four regional offices. It assists military defendants as well as civilians. The local chapter of Federacion Internacional de Abogadas (FIDA) and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative also practice public-interest law from offices in Kampala. In March the Law Development Center established a legal aid clinic to address cases involving children and those accused of petty crimes. A public defense service also was established in March, but did not receive any government funding. It relied solely on donor support.

The military court system does not assure the right to a fair trial. Although the accused has the right to retain legal counsel, military defense attorneys often are untrained and may be assigned by the military command, which also appoints the prosecutor and the adjudicating officer. The sentence passed by a military court, which can include the death penalty, may be appealed to the High Command but not to the High or Supreme Courts. A court-martial appeals process was established in 1997.

The Government continued to arrest and charge persons for treason, especially captured rebel fighters, in numbers greater than the judicial system could manage. In the past, numerous human rights abuses were committed in connection with treason cases, including political detention, detention without charge, detention in unregistered and unofficial places of remand, and mistreatment, including torture. There were reports that at times such abuses continued during the year. At the end of the year, prison officials put the number of those on remand on the charge of treason at 309, none of whom were children. Detainees included members of the Islamic Tabliq group suspected of supporting ADF rebels. Between August and December, 892 suspected WNBF members were acquitted of treason charges and released. On October 12, the Government released, without condition, 147 persons detained since 1997 on suspicion of belonging to the rebel UNRF-II. In November more than 400 prisoners held without trial since at least 1997 held a protest at Luzira prison (see Section 1.d.).

The number of political prisoners is unknown but believed to be small. Bright Gabula Africa, whose death sentence for treason was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1995, remains imprisoned pending the outcome of his appeal to the Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy, a largely autonomous constitutional body that recommends whether presidential clemency powers should be exercised in a given case.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The Constitution provides for the protection of privacy, which the Government generally observes; however, there were some exceptions. The law requires that police have search warrants before entering private homes or offices, and the police generally observed this

law in practice; however, in its effort to combat rebels in the north, the UPDF often invaded private homes without warrants. LDU's arrest citizens without authority. The police sometimes searched vehicles without prior warrants. Prison officials routinely censor prisoners' mail.

The Government required that employees in the President's office register their political affiliation in writing (see Section 3).

During the conflict with the LRA, government forces used threats to compel citizens to leave their homes and move to areas under government protection (see Section 1.g.). Hundreds of thousands of persons remain internally displaced as a result of rebel activity (see Section 2.d.).

There were unconfirmed reports in the north that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), supported by UPDF forces, forcibly recruited Sudanese refugees for service in Sudan.

Female members of the police force are required to obtain permission from the police Inspector General before getting married. Male police officers are not subject to the same restriction.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Violations of Humanitarian Law in Internal Conflicts

Reports of violations of humanitarian law continued to decrease in the north, but remained a problem in the west. In the north, government forces continued their policy of maintaining so-called protected villages with UPDF detachments nearby as a means of protecting civilians and denying support to the LRA. Although substantial NGO and donor community assistance has improved the overall conditions in the villages, conditions still remain poor. This policy of maintaining protected villages continues to be attacked by parliamentarians from the area, although less vehemently than before since many persons have returned to their home villages; however, while the UPDF did not coerce persons to remain in most protected villages, in February two new protected villages, Patika A and Patika B, were created near the Sudanese border and villagers in the surrounding area were forced to evacuate their homes and move to these villages.

The UHRC opened an investigation into a 1998 incident in which UPDF forces, while combating suspected LRA rebels, reportedly killed 30 Acholi children abducted by the LRA in Ogok village, Kitgum district.

In December the Parliament offered a 6-month amnesty to rebel fighters. Under the terms of the amnesty, rebels would have 6 months from the date President Museveni signed the amnesty to give themselves up and turn in their weapons. Museveni's signature was pending at year's end.

In the west and southwest, the ADF continued to attack civilian targets, trading centers, and private homes, resulting in hundreds of deaths and abductions. The ADF killed at least 350 persons and abducted an estimated 200 children, half of whom remain missing (see Sections 1.a. and 1.b.). In May ADF rebels killed four persons in Kibale National Park. On August 24, ADF rebels in Kabarole district killed eight persons and kidnaped one person who remained unaccounted for at year's end. On September 6, ADF rebels

killed five persons, including a 2-year-old child, in Kabarole district. In December ADF rebels attacked Katojo prison in the west and abducted or freed 365 prisoners. The rebels killed five persons, including two civilians, during the attack. Subsequently, several dozen inmates returned to the prison; it remains unclear whether the ADF forced some prisoners to leave the prison.

In the north, forces of the LRA, led by Joseph Kony, continued to attack civilian targets, as well as some refugee camps. After a year of few major attacks, the LRA began a series of assaults on civilian targets in late December. Attacks by the LRA during the year caused about 30 deaths and the destruction of homes and property. The LRA abducted about 250 civilians, some of whom later were released. No new incidents of mutilation were reported. The LRA continued to abduct children and, at clandestine bases, terrorized them into virtual slavery as guards, concubines, and soldiers (see Sections 6.c. and 6.f.). In addition to being beaten, raped, and forced to march until exhausted, abducted children were forced to participate in the killing of other children who attempted to escape. UNICEF estimated the number of abducted children still held captive by the LRA at almost 5,000; other estimates vary widely (see Sections 1.b. and 6.f.).

In March Rwandan Hutu rebels killed 19 persons, including 9 persons who were killed in an attack in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest national park. UNRF-II killed 7 persons and abducted 56 civilians, mostly school children, in an attack in Arua district in mid-January. USF/A and CAMP each were responsible for the death of one civilian. There were no reports of new attacks by the WNBF (see Section 1.b.).

At year's end, approximately 560,000 citizens remained displaced internally by violence in the north and west (see Section 2.d.).

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respected these rights; however, there were instances in which the Government infringed on these rights. Police at times harassed journalists by holding them at police stations for several hours of questioning. Three editors of the Monitor newspaper were arrested in May and charged with sedition and publication of false news in connection with a case in which a woman, Kandida Lakony, claimed to have been abused by the UPDF (see Section 1.c.). Their case was pending before the courts at year's end. A correspondent for the Luganda-language edition of the New Vision newspaper was arrested in April after filing a story on corruption in Bugiri district. On June 22, the news editor of privately owned Simba radio was detained and questioned for 4 hours by the police and Internal Security Organization operatives after the station published stories on the murder of three Makerere University students. In November the police detained and questioned the editor of the Monitor and two reporters after the Monitor published a story alleging that Angolan insurgent leader Jonas Savimbi had visited the county.

In January officials detained an opposition Member of Parliament after he made public remarks suggesting that President Museveni should be investigated for corruption (see Section 1.d.). On June 28, opposition politician Karuhanga Chapaa, arrested in 1998 for remarks made at a public seminar, was convicted of sedition and sentenced to a fine of

approximately \$35 (50,000 shillings--see Section 1.d.). In November police briefly detained a district chair of the Uganda Young Democrats for campaigning against the multiparty referendum (see Section 1.d.)

The New Vision, a government-funded daily newspaper with a daily circulation of 40,000 (and up to 10 readers sharing each copy), and the government-controlled Radio Uganda, continued to play major roles in the media. These news sources were of a fairly high quality and sometimes included reporting critical of the Government.

The media generally are free and outspoken, with widespread availability of privately owned publications. The independent Monitor newspaper, with a daily circulation of 28,000, demonstrated strong and consistent independence. The East African, a Nairobi, Kenya-based weekly publication that provides extensive reporting on the country, continued to circulate without government hindrance.

The editor of the Crusader, an independent newspaper that subsequently went bankrupt, was detained in 1998 and charged with "promoting sectarianism," following the publication of reports critical of some government policies in the President's home tribal area of Ankole. In November the Government withdrew the charges against him.

The cases against journalists Muasazi-Namiti, Hassan Kato, Charles Onyango-Obbo, and Andrew Muanda for disseminating false information were dismissed for lack of evidence.

The Government controls one television station and Radio Uganda, the radio station with the largest audience. At year's end, there were more than 15 radio stations throughout the country. There are four local television stations and more than a dozen private television stations available via satellite. The number of independent media broadcast sources increased during the year. Several independent media outlets broadcast daily political talk shows in several languages, often very critical of the Government and individual officials, including the President. High-ranking officials often participated in these programs and debated issues with political opponents. There was no censorship of these programs.

The Press and Media Law, which took effect in 1995, requires journalists to be licensed and to meet certain standards, including holding a university degree. The law provides for a Media Council that can suspend newspapers and deny access to state information. Government officials do not enforce the law vigorously; 3 years after its enactment, its provisions have not been used against any journalist.

Uncensored Internet access is widely available in major cities through three commercial service providers, although the cost for connectivity is prohibitive for all but the most aff