



Uganda

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2007](#)

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Uganda, with a population of 30 million, is a republic led by President Yoweri Museveni of the dominant National Resistance Movement (NRM) party. The February 2006 presidential and parliamentary elections generally reflected the will of the electorate; however, both were marred by serious irregularities. Security and human rights conditions improved, especially since the military pushed the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) out of northern Uganda in 2005 and began peace talks with the LRA in July 2006, and there were no reports of LRA attacks during the year. The ongoing conflict in the Karamoja region remained volatile, resulting in numerous deaths and the displacement of thousands of civilians. While civilian authorities generally maintained effective control of the security forces, elements of the security forces occasionally acted independently of government authority.

The government's human rights record remained poor. Although there were improvements in a few areas, serious problems remained, including unlawful killings by security forces; instances of torture and abuse of suspects by security forces; vigilante justice; harsh prison conditions; official impunity; arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and lengthy pretrial detention; restrictions on the right to a fair trial and on freedoms of speech, press, and association; some limits on freedom of religion; sexual abuse of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps; restrictions on opposition parties; electoral violence and irregularities; government corruption; violence and discrimination against women and children, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual abuse of children; trafficking in persons; violence and discrimination against persons with disabilities and homosexuals; and forced labor, including by children.

The LRA, which conducted its activities from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), continued to hold children that it had forcibly recruited from Uganda. Hundreds of thousands of displaced persons remained in IDP camps due to fear that LRA attacks in the country would resume.

The government continued to take steps to improve human rights during the year. The armed forces, called the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF), continued to professionalize and demonstrated a marked improvement in respect for human rights, and the government continued to improve conditions in the central prisons.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

The government or its agents did not commit any politically motivated killings; however, security forces, including police, UPDF officers, and members of Local Defense Units (LDUs) or militias, committed unlawful killings during the year. Security forces were responsible for killings during forcible dispersion of demonstrations, apprehension, and other activities; for deaths in custody, some due to torture; and for accidental killings. The government generally punished perpetrators appropriately.

On April 5, UPDF Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB) private Zepha Muhumuza killed Rukia Nandago, Collins Nabende, and Moses Kiwani in Mbale Town. Muhumuza reportedly killed Nandago, a sex worker, for failing to meet his sexual demands and subsequently shot Nabende and Kiwani for trying to intervene. The third division court martial charged Muhumuza with three counts of murder on April 6. A final ruling was pending at year's end.

On April 21, UPDF PGB lieutenant Peter Ahimbisibwe killed Presidential Office official Nelson Ssendegeya in Kampala. Ahimbisibwe was detained in Luzira prison and his trial was pending at year's end. The motive for Ssendegeya's murder remained unknown.

In April Murusi Katusabe, an LDU member, killed two civilians for refusing to share game meat in Kasese District. The police issued an arrest warrant for Katusabe, who was at large at year's end.

On October 15, Nabbingo special police constables (SPCs) Nicholas Ogulei, Noah Nkwasiabwe, and Nuuru Nkwasiabwe killed Ronald Bukyayanga in Wakiso District. Police reported that Bukyayanga died after sustaining injuries during an arrest. Bukyayanga allegedly stole a water pipeline in November 2006. The SPCs were arrested on October 16 on murder charges and remanded until November 12. The case was pending at year's end.

On May 10, the second division court martial sentenced UPDF soldier Odong Chamali to death for the May 2006 killing of four civilians and three armed soldiers in Kasese District. The court martial found his accomplice, Ekemu Ocen, guilty of murder and sentenced him to death in August 2006. Both Ocen and Chamali were awaiting execution at year's end.

There were no reports of developments in the following 2006 cases: the April case of the Mbarara police officers who killed two suspected armed robbers; the April killing of a suspected drug dealer in Mulago; the May killing of Dola in the Awach IDP camp; the May killing by torture of Abdu Semugenyi; the June killing of Wilfred Kinyera and Joel Oryem by UPDF soldiers; and the August killing of Masensio Edema.

No action was taken against acting area subcounty chief Amos O'Bani, who reportedly ordered police to fire on nightclub dancers, killing two minors, in August 2006.

Prison authorities reported that John Atwine's September 2006 death in custody was due to hypoxia.

Final rulings from the High Court on the 2005 cases of LDU member Alex Okullo, charged with killing two civilians, and UPDF private Tony Eremo, charged with killing minor Francis Ocaya Okot, were pending at year's end.

UPDF private Joel Lubangakene remained on death row for the 2005 murder of Ojok Ojara in the Lalogi IDP camp in Gulu District, and there were no developments in the case against the UDPF for allegedly killing seven civilians during a 2005 protest in response to Ojara's murder.

SPCs Joel Adrama and Dickson Anguyo were awaiting trial for the June 2005 murder by beating of Zacharia Ocitia.

There were no developments in the investigation of the 2005 killing of suspected robbers Edson Sajabi, Charles Mworzi, and Benon Kankiriho.

The trial against police officers Stephen Kasiba, Hannington Opio, and Julius Oboch for the 2005 killing in custody of Noah Katungi was pending at year's end.

There were no developments in the case against Busia District police for the 2005 murder of Abdallah Mumiro.

In contrast with 2006, there were no reports of killings by rebel or terrorist groups; however, incidents of vigilante justice were reported. There were numerous instances in which mobs beat, stoned, or burned to death individuals suspected of committing crimes.

On August 29, a mob in Sembabule District burned suspected cattle thief Issa Ssenyondo to death. Five persons were arrested in connection with the incident, but there were no further developments during the year.

There were no developments in the March 2006 mob killing of four robbers in Lira District or the May 2006 mob killing of a traditional healer in Masaka District.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances during the year; however, some disappearances from earlier years remained unresolved. There were no developments in the May 2006 disappearance of Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party member Robert Mugenyi or the 2005 disappearance of Otim Orach.

The suspects charged with the 2005 kidnapping of Geoffrey Mwebase and two others were convicted and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The four 2005 treason suspects who were held in incommunicado detention in 2006 were granted amnesty during the year.

In contrast with 2006, there were no reports of LRA abductions in northern Uganda. In previous years, the LRA forced abducted children and young adults into slavery as laborers, soldiers, guards, and sex slaves.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, there were credible reports that security forces tortured and beat suspects and that detainees died as a result of torture. Torture generally occurred in unregistered detention facilities and was intended to force confessions. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) received 164 complaints of torture during the year. Demonstrators died as a result of the forcible dispersion of demonstrations by security forces.

Reports from human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), cited examples of torture carried out by security forces, including caning; severe beating; removal of fingernails; hammering needles into the body; electrocution; use of snakes, ants, and chemical substances; rape; and inflicting pain to the genitals. According to reports, the police (81 cases); the UPDF and its intelligence branch, the Chieftancy of Military Intelligence (CMI) (133 cases); and the Violent Crime Crack Unit (VCCU) or Rapid Protection Unit (35 cases) engaged in torture.

On April 19, UPDF Major George Wakamuke, Captain Edward Nkonye Wasswa, and lieutenants Moses Kagolo and Bonny Edibungo assaulted numerous residents in Mubende District during a gun recovery operation. The Mubende military court sentenced the officers to four years' imprisonment on July 28.

On May 19, sexual abuse suspect Faizal Kirunda reportedly died in Mbale Referral Hospital of wounds inflicted by authorities at the Malukhu Prison in eastern Uganda. Kirunda's relatives filed a case with Mbale police, and a report of the investigation was pending at year's end.

On October 9, Rogers Mugenyi died of injuries received from Kampala traffic police officer Nobert Ojok during a routine traffic stop earlier in the day. Ojok was arrested on October 12 and charged with murder on October 16. The case was pending at year's end.

There were no developments in the January 2006 torture case against Gilbert Odong for injuries to Patricia Atim.

In September the army reported that UPDF soldiers did not assault Juma Muwonge in February 2006, contrary to previous reports of the incident, but that Muwonge drove through a barricade at a checkpoint, defying warnings and injuring one UPDF soldier. The army Special Investigations Branch 4th Division reported on August 16 that the injured soldier opened a civil suit against Muwonge and Nile Bus Company. The case was pending at year's end.

Dr. Joram Ajeani withdrew his September 2006 torture case against police.

There were no developments in the 2005 case of UPDF private William Bisogo, arrested for inflicting torture, or in the case of John Barigye Bakirahi and Peter Agom, UPDF soldiers charged with spying for the Rwandan government, who claimed they were tortured in CMI custody in 2004. The espionage case was pending in the court martial.

The UHRC tribunal made seven rulings on torture cases from previous years, including awarding \$9,000 (15 million shillings) to Alex Kubai, Godfrey Barma, and Albert Twayem as compensation for having been tortured by instructors during a "mchakamchaka" political training in Kapchorwa District in 2003, and \$3,600 (6 million shillings) to Paddy Mutenderwa, a university student tortured by police in 2002.

There were numerous instances in which mobs attacked suspected thieves and other persons known or suspected to have committed crimes. Motivated in part by distrust or misunderstanding of the formal judicial system, these mobs engaged in beatings, lynchings, and other forms of mistreatment.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions remained harsh and frequently life threatening. While government funding rose from \$15.5 million (26.4 billion shillings) in 2006-07 to \$23.3 million (39.5 billion shillings) in 2007-08, nearly doubling the 2005-06 allocation, limited resources hindered the Prison Authority's ability to fully implement the 2006 Prisons Act. In addition there were reports that security forces and guards tortured inmates.

Prison conditions came closest to meeting international standards in Kampala, where prisons provided medical care, running water, and sanitation; however, these prisons also were among the most overcrowded. There were an estimated 19,000 prisoners in the prison system, approximately three times the prisons' capacity. Serious problems in prisons outside of Kampala included congestion, inadequate staff, and lack of food, water, medical care, and bedding. The UHRC continued to note improved conditions at central prisons during the year, including cleaner and more structurally secure buildings, an increase in uniforms for inmates, and adequate food rations. Nevertheless, severe overcrowding remained a problem at juvenile detention facilities and in women's wings of prisons. The remand home in Kampala, designed for 45 persons, held 100 children. The reception center, designed for 30 persons, held 68 juveniles under the age of 12. Forced labor occurred; inmates at most prisons grew maize, millet, and vegetables. The UHRC accused prison farms of overworking inmates, and prisoners as young as 12 performed manual labor from dawn until dusk.

Security forces and prison officials reportedly raped detainees during the year.

The UHRC reported allegations that prison officials sometimes demanded bribes to allow visits and telephone calls; no investigations of these allegations were conducted during the year. In 2005 the government gave 59 senior prison officers the powers of magistrates to try inmates and prison staff suspected of committing such offenses. However, as in 2006, no prison officials were tried during the year.

Prison populations had high mortality rates due to overcrowding, malnutrition, diseases spread by unsanitary conditions, HIV/AIDS, and lack of medical care. The Prisons Service registered 136 deaths nationwide between January and June as a result of malaria, tuberculosis, dysentery, pneumonia, ulcers, hypoxia, electrolyte imbalance, respiratory failure, and HIV/AIDS. Local human rights activists reported that inmates at the prison were treated inhumanely.

There were no actions taken in response to the March 2006 prison death of David Isabirye, a student at Bupadhengo secondary school, in Kamuli District or the May 2006 death of three inmates in a prison in Lira District.

Female prisoners in central prisons were held in separate facilities; however, services and facilities for female prisoners in local prisons, including separate cells, were lacking. Due to lack of space in juvenile facilities, juveniles often were held in prisons with adults. In Kampala jails, pretrial detainees were separated from convicted prisoners; however, in the rest of the country, pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners sometimes were held together.

During the year the government permitted access to prisons by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), foreign diplomats, and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), principally FHRI and the Uganda Prisoners' Aid Foundation. Authorities required advance notification of visits, a process that was sometimes subject to administrative delays.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, members of the security forces arrested and detained citizens arbitrarily during the year.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The police force, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has the primary responsibility for law enforcement. The UPDF is the key armed force charged with external security but has had partial responsibility for maintaining order in the north, where it was deployed to protect civilian IDPs from rebel attacks. The Internal Security Organization (ISO) and External Security Organization, key security force agencies and intelligence-gathering entities under the direct authority of the president, occasionally detained civilians. The CMI, under UPDF authority, detained civilians suspected of rebel and terrorist activity. LDUs reinforced government efforts to protect civilians from LRA attacks. In some cases LDUs also participated in offensive military operations and carried out police functions.

Security forces continued to be constrained by limited resources, including low pay and lack of vehicles, equipment, and training. Security forces committed numerous abuses, and impunity was a problem. Police officials faced charges of bribery during the year; the police commissioner for human resources reported that three members of the police force were discharged or dismissed during the year for accepting bribes, a significant decrease from 2006 that may have been the result of an aggressive government campaign to encourage citizen reports of bribe-taking that led to 49 officers being relieved of duty in 2006. The Police Human Rights Desk investigated complaints of police abuses, including mismanagement of case papers; torture and harassment; unlawful arrest and detention; abuse of office; irregular or discreditable conduct; and corrupt practices. In conjunction with the UHRC and international organizations such as the ICRC and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UPDF and the police continued a training program to educate military officers on internationally recognized human rights standards. The police, UPDF, and prisons service also used human rights manuals in their training programs.

Arrest and Detention

The law requires search warrants be issued by judges or prosecutors before arrests are made; however, in practice suspects often were taken into custody without warrants. Despite a provision that suspects must be charged within 48 hours of arrest, many persons were detained longer without being charged. Suspects arrested under the Antiterrorism Law may be detained longer. Suspects must be brought to trial or released on bail within 120 days (360 days for a capital offense); however, if the case is presented to the court before the expiration of this period, there is no limit on pretrial detention. Detainees must be informed immediately of the reasons for their detention, although authorities did not always enforce these procedural protections in practice. The law provides for bail at the discretion of the judge, but bail was not generally provided in practice.

Detainees are required by law to have access to a lawyer; however, in practice, lack of government funding meant that

many detainees went without legal representation. There was no provision ensuring family visitation. Incommunicado detention was a problem during the year.

Mass arrests during police sweeps for criminals remained a problem, as did arrests based on treason charges. Treason suspects were subjected to numerous abuses, such as detention without charge, detention in unregistered and unofficial locations, and mistreatment, including torture. The Prison Service held 30 pretrial treason suspects during the year. The UHRC received 107 complaints during the year from persons claiming to have been arbitrarily arrested, 14 of which were confirmed by the UHRC tribunal. The government paid \$73 million (120 billion shillings) in compensation to victims during the year; however, human rights activists protested that government compensation was often slow in coming.

Human rights groups reported that civilians were detained in military barracks and unregistered detention facilities known as safe houses. Human rights groups continued to receive credible allegations that the CMI ordered detainees held incommunicado at police stations or in so-called safe houses. FHRI received reports of incommunicado detention and detention beyond prescribed periods at the central police station, specifically by the Joint Antiterrorism Task Force (JAT). JAT agents reportedly released Emmanuel Sanyu Karangwa and Congolese national Dido Manyiroha in April without charges, after having arrested them separately in October 2006; however, the whereabouts of Karangwa and Manyiroha were unknown.

Kasese District police arrested 339 suspected criminals in suburbs of Kasese Town in August. Of those arrested, 102 were taken to court and charged with being idle and disorderly, and the rest were released.

Police arbitrarily arrested journalists and demonstrators during the year.

There were no developments in the January 2006 case of Muwanga Kivumbi, the national coordinator of Popular Resistance Against Life Presidency, arrested and interrogated for seditious remarks; the February 2006 case of Yusuf Nsibambi, one of FDC opposition leader Kizza Besigye's lawyers, briefly detained by Kampala police for allegedly inciting violence; the March 2006 case of private Alan Barigye, arrested by security forces on charges of desertion; the May 2006 treason case of Azia Turigye, Hassan Isigoma, and Bashir Mustafa; or the June 2006 case of treason suspect Patrick Ssentongo; however, none of the persons mentioned above remained in detention.

The UPDF released the 100 suspected criminals who were arrested in July 2006 in Mubende District. Police authorities reported that 73 out of the 142 of those arrested in Iganga District in August 2006 were charged, 48 of whom were convicted. Prisons authorities reported that no detainees remained in prison from 2006 mass arrests.

On January 5, the court-martial dropped the 2005 terrorism and other charges against FDC opposition leader Kizza Besigye and 22 FDC members. However, the court introduced new charges of unlawful possession of firearms against the 22. Disposition of the possession of firearms case was pending at year's end. Treason charges against Besigye and the 22 are also pending in the High Court. Besigye and 18 of the 22 were released on bail. Of these, 11 were granted amnesty, one died of natural causes, while four remained in prison because they could not post bail.

Legal and human rights groups criticized the excessive length of pretrial detention, on average between two and three years but sometimes as long as seven years. The Prisons Service reported that over half of its 26,000 inmates were pretrial detainees. The UHRC heard several cases brought by prisoners challenging the length of their detention. During the year NGOs continued to report allegations of unlawful detentions by the VCCU, and FHRI reported that over 250 persons arrested by the VCCU since 2002 remained in detention without charge.

In July the president ordered an investigation into the detention of 300 UPDF soldiers attached to the PGB. The soldiers were held in Luzira, Makindye, and Katabi prisons for a period of between one to five years without trial.

Parliament's Internal Affairs committee discovered in October that 729 inmates at the Kigo Prison in Kampala had been held on remand for over five years. According to law, capital offense prisoners can not be held on remand longer than one year without trial. In response, the government in April approved the appointment of eight judges to expedite adjudication.

Amnesty

The government has offered a blanket amnesty since 2000 to former combatants for treason charges as a means to encourage defection from the LRA and other rebel groups. Almost 22,000 individuals benefited from the law since its implementation, over half of whom were former LRA members.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected this provision in practice; however, the president has extensive legal powers of judicial appointment. The president appoints Supreme Court, High Court, and Court of Appeal judges with the approval of parliament. The president also nominates, for the

approval of parliament, members of the Judicial Service Commission, who make recommendations on appointments to the judiciary. The judiciary ruled against the government on several high-profile cases during the year; however, judicial corruption was a common problem. The lower courts remained understaffed, weak, and inefficient.

In May the Inspectorate General of Government (IGG) indicted Solicitor General Lucien Tibaruha and acting Director for Litigation Joseph Matsiko, accusing them of mismanaging cases to cause financial loss for the government. President Museveni ordered them to vacate their offices on May 31; however, on June 20, a high court order invalidated Tibaruha's indictment because the IGG had not provided any evidence of serious misconduct. On September 27, President Museveni again ordered Tibaruha to vacate his office and admonished him for disobeying the original executive directive. At year's end Tibaruha and Matsiko remained out of office, despite the court decision.

On January 15, President Museveni canceled the appointment of the tribunal to investigate the conduct of High Court Judge Richard Okumu Wengi, suspended in August 2006 on allegations of gross misconduct, corruption, forgery of court documents, impropriety, and bias, and the judiciary retired Justice Wengi two days later.

The highest court is the Supreme Court, followed by the Court of Appeal, which also functions as the Constitutional Court; the High Court; magistrate's courts; and Local Council (LC) subcounty courts, parish courts, and village courts. The LC courts have the authority to settle civil disputes, including land ownership and debt cases, and criminal cases involving children. These courts, often the only ones available to villagers, reportedly exceeded their authority by hearing criminal cases not involving children. LC court decisions can be appealed to magistrate's courts; however, there often were no records made at the village level, and some defendants were not aware of their right to appeal.

The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute issued a report in September that detailed threats to the independence of the judiciary, including allegations that some members of the judiciary were pressured to collude with the police in the arrest of opposition politicians. According to the report, two High Court judges, Edmund Sempa Lugayizi and John Bosco Katutsi, withdrew from FDC leader Besigye's treason case, citing military interference and pressure; government officials defied judicial decisions in a January 11 court ruling to release People's Redemption Army (PRA) suspects on bail; and opposition members of parliament (MPs) were subjected to bail procedures for minor offenses which they alleged were timed to force them to spend a night or even the weekend in prison, despite the fact that they had been granted bail.

The military court system often did not assure the right to a fair trial. Although the accused has the right to legal counsel, some military defense attorneys were untrained and could be assigned by the military command, which also appoints the prosecutor and the adjudicating officer. The law establishes a court martial appeals process; however, a sentence passed by a military court, including the death penalty, could be appealed only to the senior leadership of the UPDF. Under circumstances deemed exigent, a field court martial could be convened at the scene of the crime. The law does not permit appeal of a conviction under a field court martial. The military general court martial can try civilians charged with crimes listed under the UPDF Act.

The military trial of Henry Tumukunde, the former director of the ISO, for violating army rules and regulations was ongoing at year's end.

Trial Procedures

An inadequate system of judicial administration and a lack of resources resulted in a serious backlog of cases and limited the right to a fair trial. All nonmilitary trials are public, but without juries. Defendants have the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. The law requires that the government provide an attorney for indigent defendants accused of capital offenses, but there were rarely funds to retain adequate counsel. By law defendants can confront or question witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence on their behalf. Defendants and their attorneys have limited access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases. There is a presumption of innocence, and defendants have the right of appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were reports of political prisoners and detainees during the year, but reliable statistics were unavailable.

Bright Gabula Africa, whose death sentence for treason was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1995, remained imprisoned pending the outcome of his appeal to the Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy, a largely autonomous constitutional body.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters. In the case of a human rights violation, there is access to the UHRC, which has the powers of a court under the constitution. These powers include the authority to order the release

of detainees, payment of compensation to victims, and other legal remedies.

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

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions. At times the police did not obtain search warrants, as required by law, to enter private homes and offices.

The High Court did not rule on the December 2006 invasion of privacy case initiated by Juliet Mukasa, chair of the Sexual Minorities of Uganda Group, who claimed local government officials illegally searched her home in 2005.

The Antiterrorism Act authorizes certain law enforcement officials to intercept communications to detect and prevent terrorist activities. The government continued to monitor telephone communications.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts

Since the military pushed the LRA out of northern Uganda and peace talks began in 2006, there were fewer reports of abuses in internal conflicts. The ongoing conflict in the Karamoja region remained volatile and resulted in numerous deaths and the displacement of thousands of civilians; however, the OHCHR reported that the situation in Karamoja also improved during the year. Human rights groups noted marked improvement in the UPDF's respect for human rights and its prosecution of violators of human rights during the year; however, serious problems remained, particularly among the LDUs and militias.

Killings

There were no reports of government killings of suspected LRA rebels during the year, nor were there reports of LRA killings of government forces or civilians; however, there were killings in the Karamoja conflict during the year. In contrast with 2006, there were no reports that security forces or government officials provided material support to armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Authorities continued to search for one of the LDU militia members who killed 12 civilians and injured 28 others in Ogwete camp in May 2006. Of the seven others, a 2006 court martial sentenced six to prison and one was killed evading arrest.

There were no developments in the June 2006 UPDF killing of two civilians in Gulu District; the August 2006 UPDF patrol unit killing of Samuel Odida Opira in Labuje IDP camp; the 2005 killing of two female residents of Pajule IDP camp by suspected LRA rebels; or the search for the UPDF soldier who killed Ben Oketta and his wife Donica Ajok in Olwal IDP camp in 2005. There was no further action taken to address the January 2006 UPDF accidental killings of three hunters in Omoro County or the two residents of Amoro IDP camp.

There were no developments in 2006 LRA or suspected LRA attacks, including the January killing of four civilians at a disco in Adjumani District; the February killing of six civilians in Apac District; or the April killing of four hunters in Gulu District.

In the Karamoja region, there were fewer interclan cattle raids between Karamojong tribes in the east; however, the government intensified its forced disarmament campaign. The raids and the UPDF response resulted in an estimated 149 deaths during the year, according to media reports.

On January 17, Karamojong warriors from the Pain tribe killed nine women gathering firewood in Nakapiripirit District.

On February 12, Karamojong warriors killed four UPDF soldiers in Kotido District. The army killed seven warriors in retaliation.

There were no reports of developments in the January 2006 Karamojong killing of five herdsmen and stealing of 600 cattle and 70 goats in Nakapiripirit District; the March 2006 Kenyan Pokot killing of 14 civilians and six UPDF soldiers during a cross-border raid; the May 2006 Karamojong killing of three UPDF soldiers and injuring of six civilians in Nakapiripirit District; the July 2006 Karamojong killing of three civilians in Lira District; or the 2005 Kenyan Pokot killing of civilians and police officers.

Abductions

There were no reported abductions in internal conflicts during the year; however, there were no developments in any of the 2006 or prior cases of abduction by LRA rebels, and abducted individuals remained missing.

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture

Government forces and Karamojong warriors continued to clash during the disarmament exercise, with reports of physical abuse, punishment, and killings. Security forces continued to use excessive force on occasion, including rape. There were no significant incidents between the government and the LRA during the year.

On September 3, OHCHR in Uganda released a report covering events from April to August in Karamoja that criticized the army "for downplaying some of the deaths and other human rights violations, claiming they were unavoidable given the circumstances." Nevertheless, the report noted significant overall improvement in the human rights situation, saying there was marked reduction in human rights violations, road ambushes, and illegal firearms possession. The report further stated that the army had made progress in reducing the number of guns and ammunition circulating in the troubled region. However, HRW noted there was an increase in violations during the last months of the year.

Ochen Obonyo, an LDU member in Pader District, raped Rozalba Aborto, who later died in hospital on October 24. The UPDF arrested Obonyo and later transferred him to police custody. The investigation was pending at year's end.

There were no developments in the 2005 case against UPDF soldiers for torturing a suspected LRA collaborator or the 2005 rape of two girls by four UPDF soldiers in Kumi District.

Simon Tolit, a suspected financier of LRA leader Joseph Kony, claimed he was arrested, detained in a safe house, and tortured for three days in 2002. In June he filed suit against the government in the High Court for wrongful arrest, and a January 2008 hearing was scheduled.

Child Soldiers

The government denied allegations of underage recruitment into the army, including that of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict who estimated that 5,000 children were serving in the armed forces in June 2006. The government claimed that some minors might have falsified birth documents to meet the 18-year age requirement of the military.

The LRA regularly abducted and conscripted thousands of children in previous years; however, there were no reports of such activity during the year, and there were no further reports of UPDF interrogations of former LRA child soldiers. Children abducted by the LRA in previous years were used as laborers, soldiers, guards, and sex slaves. In addition to being beaten, raped, and forced to march until exhausted, abducted children were forced to participate in the killing of other children. Most LRA rebels were children between the ages of 11 and 16.

Other Conflict-Related Abuses

As the security situation in the north continued to improve as a result of the military successfully pushing the LRA out of northern Uganda and the ongoing peace talks, thousands of IDPs were able to return to or near their homes of origin. However, clashes between Karamojong warriors and the UPDF continued to cause civilians in the region to remain in or seek out IDP camps. According to the World Food Program (WFP), the violence also impacted food security for over a half million Karamojong.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law generally provide for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government at times restricted these rights, and the law criminalizes offenses by the media and limited the media's ability to function effectively. The government also at times harassed and intimidated journalists, and the independent media continued to practice self-censorship.

The government attempted to impede criticism through detention and interrogation of politicians and activists who made public statements critical of the government. The president's office reportedly monitored political talk show debates closely, and the government occasionally attempted to block participation of opposition members on radio talk shows. Opposition politicians reported difficulties in securing media outlets to convey their message.

On April 22, security operatives in Kampala briefly detained Democratic Party (DP) members Jethro Nuwagaba and Kivumbi Mwanga for criticizing the government on radio talk shows.

On August 24, Kampala police summoned Makindye East parliamentarian Hussien Kyanjo for inciting public violence through seditious statements for comments he made urging the Buganda region to secede from Uganda during a Central

Broadcasting Station radio talk show on July 17. He was later released, but a court case against him was pending at year's end.

There were no charges brought against the following opposition members interrogated by police in 2006: FDC's secretary for women's affairs Ingrid Turinawe for making remarks against the government on local radio in 2005; president of the Conservative Party Ken Lukyamuzi for allegedly stating in 2005 that there would be war if the president were reelected; and Aswa County parliamentarian Reagan Okumu, for stating that the president wanted to sell land belonging to the Acholi people.

The independent media were generally active and expressed a wide variety of views, although they faced obstacles. Media laws require that journalists be licensed and meet certain standards, such as possessing a university degree in journalism or the equivalent. The law also grants the Media Council the power to suspend newspapers. There were many privately owned publications and broadcasts.

Press intimidation increased during the year. An FHRI December report showed that judicial sanctions and arbitrary police actions were employed to intimidate the media critical of the government and that these restrictive measures encouraged self censorship. The government pressured the *Monitor*, the largest independent newspaper, to suspend reporters Andrew Mwenda and Timothy Kalyegira on May 17 for writing articles critical of the government, although the paper reversed the decision on May 23. Government pressure also led to the transfer of managing director Conrad Nkutu on June 30. The *Weekly Observer* continued to publish critical pieces despite the government's ongoing pursuit of a case against the paper's editor and a reporter. The *East African*, a Kenya-based weekly, reported extensively on political news without government interference. The government owned several daily newspapers.

The police forwarded media cases considered to be attacks against the state to the Media Council. There were 39 cases filed against the *Red Pepper*, 10 against the *Monitor*, and five against the *Weekly Observer*. The Media Council dismissed all 54 cases on technical grounds.

The government continued to operate the only public radio and television stations. The reporting on these stations was not considered to be independent. Government-controlled media were primarily used to advocate for the administration's political agenda.

Independent television and radio stations that hosted opposition political candidates on talk shows in which critical statements were made against the government or the military were sometimes subject to government interference.

On February 2, the Uganda Broadcasting Council closed Nation Television (NTV) allegedly for technical reasons. NTV is part of the Kenya-based Nation Media Group that owns the *Monitor* and KFM radio. NTV was permitted to resume transmission on April 30, after its management met certain conditions outlined by the government, including ensuring that its outlets provided fair and balanced coverage of the government and government programs.

The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation cancelled Tom Gawayo-Tegulle's television talk show after FDC opposition leader Besigye's July 12 appearance.

On October 4, suspected security operatives raided Life Radio, a local radio station in western Uganda, over the controversial "Peoples' Rights and Awareness" program on October 4. Security agents allegedly poured acid on the station's radio transmitter.

The government continued to ban new radio stations in Kampala reportedly due to limited technical frequencies, although the ban was widely disregarded in practice without penalty.

Security forces arrested and harassed journalists for their reporting. On March 1, security personnel in Kampala assaulted several journalists, including Sam Mateka of Simba FM, Richard Ssemakula of the government-owned *Bukedde* newspaper, and Charles Sekajja of Ddembe FM. The journalists were covering a case involving PRA treason suspects at the High Court.

On March 2, security forces assaulted photographer Chris Ahimbisibwe, from the government-owned *New Vision*, in Bushenyi District while he was covering a trial of suspected PRA members. He filed a complaint with the Uganda Human Rights Commission, which was pending at year's end.

Also in March, police assaulted several journalists covering a High Court case involving suspected PRA rebels. The Uganda Journalists Association filed a complaint with the inspector general of police (IGP) alleging harassment and intimidation by the police force based on these incidents and police interrogations during the year. The investigation was pending the establishment of a committee at year's end.

There were no further developments in the March 2006 case involving two Open Gate FM employees who remained free

on bail or the 2005 case against Major General Kahinda Otafiire, former minister of water, lands, and environment, for threatening *Monitor* photojournalist Mike Odongkara with a gun.

The 2005 ban on media coverage of opposition leader Kizza Besigye's trial continued, although the ban was widely disregarded without penalty.

The government used criminal libel laws to suppress criticism of political leaders. On November 5, police questioned *Monitor* journalists Emmanuel Gyezaho and Robert Mukasa about a story they published on Inspectorate General of Government Faith Mowondha's alleged salary irregularities. The journalists were pressured to divulge their sources and charged with criminal libel; the case was ongoing at year's end.

Winnie Byanyima, wife of FDC leader Besigye, and FDC Treasurer Jack Sabiiti agreed to pay damages to the deputy chief justice and the justice of the high court, stemming from January 2006 charges of libel and providing false information that were dropped on October 6.

The government cited national security as grounds to interrogate journalists and ban newspaper content. For example, police in Kampala cited national security when they interrogated six *Monitor* journalists after the newspaper began a series that called Museveni's government responsible for former Uganda Freedom Movement leader Kayiira's 1987 death. The *Monitor* stopped publication of the series following government interference.

The *Monitor* suspended publication of a series of articles on the order of the attorney general in December 2006; the series chronicled the history of the country's security services. The High Court temporarily permitted the paper to resume the series, publishing only unclassified material, but a High Court case to publish the rest of the material was ongoing at year's end.

Former *Monitor* reporter Andrew Mwenda's 2005 sedition case was pending a Constitutional Court decision on a petition challenging media laws including sedition and defamation at year's end. In August Mwenda returned to the country and started a new weekly news magazine, the *Independent*, which the government tried to prevent from being published.

The 2005 government suit against the *Weekly Observer* editor and a reporter for promotion of sectarianism remained on hold pending the outcome of a petition to the Constitutional Court in the Mwenda case.

Internet Freedom

Individuals and groups could generally engage in the peaceful expression of views via the Internet, including by e-mail; however, at times the government restricted access. The February 2006 ban on access to radiokatwe.com, an antigovernment gossip Web site, remained in place.

Access to the Internet continued to increase during the year, although only approximately 5.7 percent of the population used the Internet monthly due to lack of infrastructure.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom and no reports of censored cultural events or films, unlike in 2006. However, research clearance in certain academic areas, such as history and political science, was difficult to obtain.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The law restricts freedom of assembly. As a result of a September 27 declaration by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, IGP permits are required for all public meetings, demonstrations, and processions; previously, such requirements only applied to unregistered groups and parties.

The 2005 ban on demonstrations related to FDC leader Besigye's trial remained in effect, although it was ignored. Police denied permission to hold public rallies, used excessive force to disperse demonstrations, and arrested demonstrators during the year. Some police attempts to prevent or disperse demonstrations resulted in death.

On January 6, Kampala police fired tear gas to disperse DP supporters during a rally. DP members Vincent Kabuubi, Deo Ssekitoleko, Fred Sebyoto, and Geoffrey Tomusange were arrested and charged with taking part in an illegal assembly. The four were released on bond, but the court issued a second warrant of arrest after they failed to appear on July 6. The case was pending at year's end.

On March 5, Kampala police fired tear gas at FDC leader Besigye and 200 supporters during a protest. The press reported that a child was killed in the scuffle. IGP Major General Kale Kayihura ordered an inquiry into the incident on March 10; however, there were no findings by year's end.

On April 12, police arrested parliamentarians Beatrice Atim Anywar, Hussein Kyanjo, and 24 others during a demonstration against the proposed sale of Mabira Forest Reserve land. Five persons were killed during the scuffle. The MPs and 20 of the 24 suspects were charged with rioting and released on bail on April 17. The remaining four were charged with murder and released on bail on July 30. Both cases were pending at year's end.

Jinja District police arrested 12 students of the Islamic Institute in Bugembe for participating in a June 29 protest against more restrictive Shari'a laws in the school; five students were injured. The students were charged with unlawful assembly and rioting and released on bail on July 7. The case was pending at year's end.

On July 3, Moyo District police injured five students while trying to stop a protest at the Itula Secondary School on July 3. Police officers Fremilo Amoli, Julius Wayikonga, and George Munguacel were charged with inflicting the injuries on October 16 and subsequently suspended from the police force. A hearing was scheduled for October 23.

There were no arrests made in the July 2006 police shooting of three students during a demonstration at Pajule Technical College; the July 2006 police killing of a resident in Luwero District during dispersal of a mob; or the August 2006 police killing of Jimmy Opio in Apac during dispersal of a mob. A court acquitted the 45 Makerere students charged in November 2006 with illegal rioting during a university lecturers' strike.

No action was taken against police responsible for injuring protesters during forcible dispersions of demonstrators in 2005. During the year charges were dismissed against demonstrators for illegal assembly in 2005.

Freedom of Association

The constitution provides for freedom of association, and the government generally respected these rights.

The government announced it would initiate new regulations to provide a framework under which NGOs and churches would operate, following increased reports in July about their illegal activity, including extortion, fraud, trafficking in persons, and homosexual practices. The NGO Board said it would institute a survey to scrutinize the activities of 7,000 registered NGOs, including churches.

NGOs continued to express concerns about the NGO Registration Act, passed in April 2006, which requires most NGOs, including religious organizations, to renew their registration permits annually. NGOs operating in the north also expressed concern over increased government interference in their activities. Government officials accused the NGOs of exploiting the situation in the north and of not using funds for planned activities. The NGO Forum, a group of local NGOs, initiated an investigation into the government's allegations.

c. Freedom of Religion

The constitution and law provide for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected this right in practice with some minor restrictions. The law requires religious groups and foreign missionaries to register with the government under the same law as NGOs; failure to register is a criminal offense, and religious groups have also expressed concern about the new annual registration requirements.

There were reports that the government refused to grant registration to self-proclaimed religious groups on the grounds that the groups were not legitimate religious organizations. Several religious groups shut down by police as suspected "cults" in previous years remained inactive at year's end.

Related to the government's announcement to create a new regulatory framework for NGOs and churches, police authorities opened a general inquiry file on fraudulent church leaders at the end of July; however, the government did not deregister any churches during the year.

There were no reports of violence by the government or its agents against religious groups, leaders, or individual members; however, there were reports that the government restricted worship by certain religious groups.

On August 16, Gulu Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Walter Ochora blocked a request by New Melta Jerusalem Church leader Saverino Lukoya Lakwena to hold prayers in his district, citing national security. Gulu police arrested church members Francis Opwonya, Samuel Mwaka, Grace Acan, Grace Amony, and Tom Dennis Olobo on September 20 during a worship assembly, and the Gulu court charged the five with unlawful assembly and disorderly conduct. The suspects were released on bail pending a February 2008 hearing.

Reportedly for security and noise abatement reasons, bans against evangelical churches' nighttime prayer meetings remained in effect in residential areas of several districts during the year. On August 31, Kayunga RDC Margret Baryehuki threatened to close down any church that defied the local ban, saying that the churches made a lot of noise and that criminals disguised as churchgoers robbed homes during services.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious belief or practice, and prominent social leaders took positive steps to promote religious freedom; however, some members of more traditional religious groups accused certain evangelical groups of practicing "witchcraft."

The Jewish community represents less than 1 percent of the population. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2007 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution and law provide for freedom of movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, the government at times limited these rights in practice. A married woman must obtain her husband's written permission on her passport application if children are to be listed on her passport. There were reports that government agents blocked the travel of opposition party members.

There was no information on whether the law permits or prohibits forced exile. However, the government did not use forced exile during the year.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Approximately one-third of the 1.8 million IDPs in LRA-affected northern Uganda returned to or near their homes due to improved security conditions. Despite the relative security, fear of the LRA's forced recruitment, rape, murder, political intimidation, and slavery continued to force hundreds of thousands of IDPs to endure squalid conditions in camps. Insecurity in the Karamoja region continued to displace residents. In September the UN Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs reported there were 292,414 IDPs in the north due to the LRA insurgency and 165,000 Karamojong displaced as a result of the UPDF/Karamojong clashes related to forced disarmament. According to the WFP, another 560,000 Karamojong within Karamoja have been displaced due to drought.

Although the government and domestic and international humanitarian organizations provided assistance to IDPs, health and living conditions remained precarious, and many IDPs, particularly women and children, were deprived of access to education, basic health care, safe water, protection, and shelter. However, as the security situation in the northern districts improved during the year, IDPs traveled outside the camps to farm, hunt, and gather wood and water, and they began to return to or near their homes. The government continued to work with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other international organizations to prepare IDPs to return to their home areas. As of November, 526,300 IDPs had returned to their homes, and 409,000 had left camps and were seeking interim solutions for return. All returns were voluntary.

There was one confirmed report of an LDU member raping a female IDP in the north during the year; however, unlike in previous years, there were no reports that security forces detained and mistreated suspected LRA collaborators in the camps. Several human rights organizations reported inhuman and degrading treatment of IDPs during the ongoing forced disarmament exercise in Karamoja, including rape by UPDF troops.

In contrast with 2006, there were no reports of attacks by Karamojong warriors on IDPs.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. The government granted refugee status or asylum.

In practice the government provided protection against refoulement, the return of persons to a country where there is reason to believe they feared persecution.

The government provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention and 1967 protocol; no individuals received such protection during the year.

Since 2006 the government assisted UNHCR with small-scale repatriation of Sudanese refugees to southern Sudan. The government generally cooperated with UNHCR, International Organization for Migration, and other humanitarian organizations involved in refugee work.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution and law provide citizens with the right to change their government; however, the ruling party's domination of the government and some restrictive constitutional and statutory provisions limited citizens' effective exercise of this right.

Elections and Political Participation

During the year the Electoral Commission conducted eight by-elections to fill seats declared vacant by the High Court for irregularities that occurred during the 2006 parliamentary elections. The media reported that several of the by-elections were marred by arrests of opposition members, violence, intimidation, and bribery. Local observers said the presence of intimidation squads, undercover police personnel, and security incidents caused fear among voters.

The February 2006 elections, the first multiparty general elections since President Museveni came to power in 1986, generally reflected the will of the people, although serious irregularities occurred. The police recorded 450 cases of violence during the 2006 election period, including the killing of two persons by Ramadhan Magara, a UPDF soldier, when he fired into a crowd gathered to see FDC opposition leader Besigye. The case was ongoing at year's end, and, despite public protests, Magara remained out on bail since December 2006.

More than 100 election challenges were filed in the High Court and the Constitutional Court following the February 2006 elections, including charges of bribery, intimidation, incidents of violence, multiple voting, and ballot stuffing. The courts nullified the results of 18 elections, and appeals for 10 of the petitions were pending at the Supreme Court at year's end.

The ruling NRM party operated without restriction, regularly holding rallies and conducting political activities. Approximately 33 other parties were registered and allowed to function, although members of some parties were subject to political violence, and authorities sometimes restricted opposition parties' ability to meet or demonstrate. Political involvement was primarily concentrated within the elite.

On January 22, the Masaka District Court charged DP President John Sebaana Kizito and MPs Erias Lukwago and Issa Kikungwe with falsifying documents that implicated the government in the 1987 murder of Andrew Kayiira, a former energy minister and leader of the defunct Uganda Freedom Movement. The case was pending at year's end.

There were 201 women in the 332-member parliament. Of these, 80 held seats designated for women. There were seven female ministers and seven female junior ministers in the president's 66-member cabinet. Activists were concerned that the ratio in the cabinet did not meet the required 40 percent female representation. The deputy speaker, the deputy chief justice of the Supreme Court, and the IGG were women.

There were 105 members of minority groups in parliament. The law requires elections through electoral colleges for the seats reserved for special interest groups in parliament: 80 seats were reserved for women; five for organized labor; five for persons with disabilities; five for youth; and 10 for the army, selected by the UPDF High Command and President Museveni.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, and the government investigated offenders; nevertheless, officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators reflected that corruption was a serious problem. The government selectively enforced the leadership code, which requires the financial disclosure by government officials and their family members. Government agencies responsible for combating corruption include the IGG, parliamentary accounting committees, the police Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Office of the Auditor General, and the Directorate for Ethics and Integrity. Political will to combat corruption at the highest levels of government remains weak. In June the auditor general reported that the government lost a significant portion of its 2005-06 budget to loans not recorded, irregular procurements, and payments to nonexistent public service staff, among other problems.

In April the IGG released her investigation of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, which alleged that in 2005 and 2006 the former health minister, his deputies, and senior government officials misdirected \$900,000 (1.5 billion shillings) in reward monies received for exceeding immunization targets to support President Museveni's reelection campaign. The officials were arrested in May and released on bail; they maintained they were authorized by the office of the president to use the funds for political mobilization. The defendants petitioned the High Court to block the IGG from continuing to demand repayment of the missing funds while the case was in court and to prevent her effort to prosecute

one of the defendants under the Leadership Code. The High Court ruled in favor of the defendants and was considering another petition to remove the lower court magistrate, who is the IGG's cousin, from hearing the case. The case was pending at year's end.

In November the Parliamentary Committee for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, which oversees the IGG, began an investigation into cases in which the IGG intervened in public tendering processes and allegations that the IGG was receiving a higher salary than that to which she was entitled. The IGG refused to appear before the committee.

On November 28, the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee requested the arrest of Martin Odwedo, the permanent secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, and three others for failing to account for \$776,000 (1.3 billion shillings). The police arrested and later released Odwedo. Investigations in the case were on ongoing at year's end.

The July 2006 case of abuse of office and irregular conduct against deputy passport officer Chris Ongyero was pending at year's end. A police investigation exonerated codefendant Edith Manyire, an immigration officer, in May.

The cases reported in the press in 2006 involving the minister for information and communication technology and the minister for regional cooperation were found to be erroneous.

The September 2006 case against Uganda Muslim Supreme Council Mufti Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubajje and his deputy, Sheikh Twaib Mukuye, who were accused of mismanaging council affairs, was pending in court.

The September 2006 case of National Council of Sports officials Nicholas Muramagi and Timothy Magala, charged with fraud, forgery, and false accountability, was pending in court. The CID ordered the officials to pay \$17,000 (29 million shillings), but they had not done so at year's end.

In November 2006, former Minister of Gender, Labor and Social, Zoe Bakoko; former National Social Security Fund (NSSF) Board Chairman Geoffrey Onegi Obel; former NSSF Director, Leonard Mpuuma; and James Isabirye were charged with causing financial loss of over \$4.5 million (8 billion shillings) and abuse of office. Onegi Obel, Mpuuma, and Isabirye were arrested and later released on bail. Authorities issued an arrest warrant for Bakoko, who was believed to be living outside of the country. The case was pending at year's end.

In April the government found that the permanent secretaries and project coordinator should be held responsible for the failure of the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, which suspended its \$216 million (362 billion shillings) in grants in 2005. The cabinet recommended that the police investigate individuals named in a government commission investigative report, but at year's end, the government had not funded the investigation. The media reported that over \$400,000 (700 million shillings) was recovered from individuals and institutions implicated in the misappropriation of the funds. A total of \$1.4 million (2.3 billion shillings) could not be accounted for. The Global Fund resumed after stricter accounting mechanisms in the Finance Ministry were established in May.

The law provides for public access to government information, and the government provided such access in practice to citizens and noncitizens, including foreign media.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were receptive to their views. Active, independent domestic groups included FHRI, Human Rights Focus, Human Rights Network, Human Rights and Peace Center of Makerere University, the International Federation of Human Rights, the Justice and Peace Commission, the Uganda Journalist Safety Committee, the Uganda Prisoner's Aid Foundation, and the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers. Government officials continued to attend conferences and seminars hosted by NGOs on social problems and cooperated with NGOs on legal and prison reforms.

On May 28, armed Karamojong killed a WFP driver in an ambush, leading to a temporary suspension of WFP aid. The police arrested and charged Karamojong Aleper Apanangiro and John Apakure with murder on December 26; both were in prison at year's end. The UPDF began providing escort convoys to on-duty WFP employees.

The government cooperated with international governmental organizations and permitted visits by UN representatives and organizations such as the ICRC.

On September 3, an OHCHR report noted a marked reduction in human rights violations in Karamoja but accused the army of downplaying deaths and other abuses as "unavoidable given the circumstances."

The law establishes the UHRC as a permanent independent body with quasi-judicial powers. The president appoints the UHRC's eight-member board. Under the law, the UHRC may subpoena information, order the release of detainees, and order the payment of compensation for abuses. The UHRC continued to pursue suspected human rights abusers, including high-level officials in the government and military, and had branches countrywide; however, the UHRC did not have adequate resources to investigate all complaints it received.

Human rights and the UHRC fall under the Parliamentary Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, a body that human rights NGOs generally consider valuable.

The government continued bilateral discussions regarding reparations that the International Court of Justice ordered it to pay to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2005.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, the government did not enforce the law in matters of locally or culturally prevalent discrimination against women, children, persons with disabilities, or certain ethnic groups.

Women

The law criminalizes rape; however, the government did not consistently enforce the law. Although the government arrested, prosecuted, and convicted persons for rape during the year, there were reports that some cases were not investigated and the problem was underreported. Police recorded two rape cases committed by civilians during the year. One rape case of an IDP in the north resulted in the arrest of a security officer, and there were several other unconfirmed reports of rape in IDP camps by security forces. Reports indicated that female IDP victims were often reluctant to officially report rape for fear of reprisal. Women and girls were not victims of abduction and rape by rebel forces as they were in previous years.

Domestic violence against women, including spousal abuse, remained common, and reports increased during the year. The law prohibits assault and battery with penalties from one to five years depending on the seriousness of the assault; however, there were no laws that specifically protected women from spousal abuse. Further, many law enforcement officials continued to view wife-beating as a husband's prerogative, in line with the majority of the population, and rarely intervened in cases of domestic violence. According to a 2006 survey, 70 percent of women were physically or sexually abused, and 60 percent of men condoned wife beating as did 70 percent of women. In June police produced a booklet entitled *Responding to Domestic Violence* to assist the community and police in handling the issue.

The law requires that bride prices be nonrefundable gifts to the parents of the bride. The constitutional amendments approved by parliament did not include a provision to abolish bride prices, despite 2003 recommendations to do so from civil society groups.

There was no national law against FGM, which was practiced by the Sabiny ethnic group in rural Kapchorwa District and the Pokot ethnic group along the northeastern border with Kenya. However, since January 2006 subcounties of Kapchorwa and Bukwo districts passed bylaws to make FGM illegal. The government, women's groups, and international organizations continued programs to combat the practice through education. These programs, which received some support from local leaders, emphasized close cooperation with traditional authority figures and peer counseling.

Prostitution is illegal; however, it was common. Reports of prostitution in the IDP camps in the north increased during the year. An October report released by Human Rights Focus, a rights group based in the north, revealed that women were forced to have sex to obtain employment.

Sexual harassment was a common problem; although it was prohibited by law with penalties up to 14 years' imprisonment, the government did not effectively enforce the law.

On October 16, 30 nurses from Nakaseke hospital sued the minister of health over sexual harassment by a senior staff member. Authorities had not completed the investigation by year's end.

On June 26, eight instructors from the Kabalya Police Training School in Masindi District were suspended and arrested for sexually assaulting female police trainees. There were no reports of further action in the case. Since the scandal, female and male trainees have been separated.

Discrimination against women continued to be widespread, especially in rural areas where it was part of traditional practices. Many customary laws discriminate against women in the areas of adoption, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Under local customary law in many areas, women cannot own or inherit property or retain custody of their children. Traditional divorce law in many areas requires women to meet stricter evidentiary standards than men to prove adultery.

Polygamy is legal under both customary and Islamic law, and, in some ethnic groups, men could "inherit" the widows of their deceased brothers. Women also experienced economic discrimination. For example, they did most of the agricultural work but owned only 7 percent of the agricultural land.

Eliminating gender inequality remained a high priority for the government, which, in conjunction with NGOs and women's rights groups, sponsored workshops and trainings throughout the country to increase awareness of women's rights. A 2007 Uganda Women's Network report claimed that the government's introduction of a multiparty system gave women a greater voice.

One women's rights NGO, Law and Advocacy for Women in Uganda, won its March 2006 case in the Constitutional Court challenging the law that imposes limitations on a widow's inheritance of her husband's property; the court declared the law unconstitutional on April 5.

Children

The government was committed to improving children's welfare, as evidenced by the fact that education received the largest percentage of the national budget. However, the government did not enforce laws protecting children effectively, due in part to cultural norms.

The government provided free education through the seventh grade, or through high school for underprivileged students under the Universal Secondary Education initiative launched during the year. Students, except for the underprivileged, still had to pay for school supplies and some school costs, and education was not compulsory. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in April that the primary school enrollment rate was 87 percent for both boys and girls; however, the proportion of girls in higher grades remained lower than that of boys. Boys also were more likely to finish primary school and performed better on examinations for admission into secondary school. The highest level of education achieved by most children was the fourth year of primary school.

Child abuse remained a serious problem, particularly rape and other sexual abuse of girls; however, there were fewer reported incidents of corporal punishment in schools since the August 2006 ban on the practice. An African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect survey showed a 91.6 percent increase of child abuse cases from January to June, part of which could be due to increased reporting as a result of government- and NGO-sponsored awareness programs. Ritual sacrifice was also a problem, and FGM was performed on girls in the Sabinu and Pokot ethnic groups. Marriage of young girls by parental arrangement was common, particularly in rural areas, although the legal age for marriage was 18. In 2006 the Kumi District health educator reported that 60 percent of girls in the district left school between the ages of 12 and 15 years due to early marriages.

Sexual contact outside of marriage with girls under 18 years of age, regardless of consent or the age of the perpetrator, was called "defilement" under the law and carried a maximum sentence of death; however, in practice such cases often were settled by a payment to the girl's parents. Perpetrators of sexual abuse often were family members, neighbors, or teachers. In an effort to clear the backlog of cases, on May 15, the government amended the 2006 Magistrate's Courts Bill, giving chief magistrates the authority to hear rape cases of girls between the ages of 14 and 17. The High Court continued to try cases involving rape of girls under 14 years.

On March 26, Bright Academy Primary School teacher Abdul Kyeyune allegedly defiled a student. The Masaka District court charged Kyeyune on March 30, and the case was pending at year's end.

On July 26, Good Hope Primary School teacher David Wildong allegedly defiled a student. The Kibale District court arrested him on August 2, and the case was pending at year's end.

Family members Laston Muyaga, Jane Magezi, Elizabeth Kantono, and Aidah Kasubo reportedly sacrificed their two-year-old female relative on August 13 in Iganga District. Police arrested the four on August 20, and the case was pending at year's end.

There were no developments in the 2005 or 2006 cases of abuse and defilement, including the July 2006 case in which Frederick Mbazira, a teacher at Katikamu Seventh-day Adventist Secondary School, beat student Beatrice Achieng into paralysis after she and other students failed to complete a geography assignment; the August 2006 case in which a group of teachers beat students at the Mandela Comprehensive Secondary School; the August 2006 case in which a traditional doctor and a housewife were charged with kidnapping a two-year-old boy to sacrifice him; or the March 2006 case against primary school teacher Paddy Katongole for defiling a seven-year-old student in September 2005.

There were reports that children in IDP areas engaged in prostitution for survival without third party involvement. An August survey conducted by the Ministry of Health in Gulu District showed that children as young as 11 engaged in prostitution in order to buy food and soap.

Improved security in the north eliminated the practice known as "night commuting," where children traveled from conflict areas or IDP camps each night to urban centers to avoid abduction by the LRA. According to UNICEF, the few hundred children who continue to seek shelter did so to avoid social problems such as poverty and domestic violence.

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons; however, the law does prohibit trafficking-related offenses. Trafficking in persons was a problem, and there were reports that men, women, and children were trafficked to, from, and within the country.

Trafficking in persons primarily occurred internally for labor, commercial sexual exploitation, and criminal activities, but increased public awareness has revealed increasing trends in trafficking of Asian and Chinese laborers to the country. There were also reports that children were trafficked to Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia. Victims of internal trafficking were subjected to hazardous working conditions, and commercial sex victims were subjected to physical abuse and the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Victims of commercial sex trafficking in urban centers often came from small rural villages. According to NGOs, women and girls often willingly placed themselves in the hands of intermediaries in order to seek employment in other areas of the country, only to find themselves in situations of commercial sexual or labor exploitation. NGOs also found evidence of a well-connected network of traffickers who facilitated the movements of victims to prospective buyers, negotiated their salaries in advance, and received a percentage of their monthly wages. One study found that women and girls could be purchased for approximately \$3 to \$18 (5,000 to 30,000 shillings) and used as domestic workers. In the case of child trafficking for labor and commercial sexual exploitation, intermediaries such as pimps, employment bureaus, churches, transporters, NGOs, fishermen, and peers lure children and facilitate their travel with accommodations and travel documents.

The penal code specifies penalties for several trafficking-related offenses; for example, the maximum penalty for the procurement of women for purposes of prostitution or detention with sexual intent is seven years' imprisonment, and the maximum penalty for trading in slaves is 10 years' imprisonment. The national police force is responsible for investigating trafficking-related crimes, and the UPDF is responsible for capturing, disarming, or eliminating LRA combatants who perpetrate trafficking in persons crimes in the north. The government made arrests of suspected traffickers during the year and assisted with international trafficking investigations or extradited citizens accused of trafficking in other countries. The government's prosecution of child defilement cases included an undetermined number of cases involving trafficked children.

According to June 7 press reports, Nickson Owiny was arrested for kidnapping with intent to enslave, which carries a 15-year sentence; he was apprehended attempting to take nine women and seven men from Uganda to Kenya between May 12 and 14.

Officials said the work of the committee established in July 2006 to investigate the alleged sale of girls in cattle markets in Katakwi District was hampered by a lack of funds. The case of one of the traffickers, Susan Amekebe, charged with inducing a person to give himself or herself as a slave, was pending at year's end, and Amekebe was out on bail.

The two Indian nationals and their Ugandan accomplices arrested in July 2006 on suspicion of involvement in human trafficking at Katuna border post near Rwanda jumped bail and were under warrant of arrest. The whereabouts of their alleged victim, Indian national Sukulu Vireer Kaur, remained unknown.

In January authorities deported Rauff Razick Mohammed, a Pakistani national found holding five Sri Lankan men against their will in December 2006.

The government and NGOs work together to identify and provide assistance to persons at risk for trafficking. The government deported victims of foreign origin, unless the minister of internal affairs granted an extended stay to aid in prosecution of the case. The UPDF has child protection units in all the districts and, along with government agencies, worked with NGOs to reintegrate thousands of LRA abductees into society.

The national police force maintains a Child and Family Protection Unit to train local police on women and children's rights, including identification and prevention of trafficking. The government spotlighted child trafficking in its nationwide Labor Ceremonies on May 1 and on the African Day of the Child in June. Other public awareness activities, including President Museveni's statements in support of comprehensive antitrafficking legislation and his participation in a February 2006 conference, demonstrated the government's commitment to tackling the growing problem.

Persons with Disabilities

The law provides protection for persons with disabilities from discrimination in employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other state services; however, the government did not enforce the law effectively. Persons with disabilities also faced widespread societal discrimination and limited job and educational opportunities. There was no

statutory requirement that buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities; however, the law requires that children with disabilities be given necessary special facilities.

During the year the government completed construction of a school in Mukono for the blind, one in Wakiso for the deaf, and another in Gulu for the persons with physical disabilities, furthering a three-fold increase in the number of children with disabilities attending school since the 1997 introduction of a universal public education campaign.

In May police in Gulu summoned an Anglican pastor over claims that he was holding mentally ill patients at his church center. Newspaper reports alleged that the patients were starved, beaten, and bound for days. The pastor denied all claims, but the government closed the center immediately.

After 2006 protests by the Uganda National Association for the Deaf, the Uganda Broadcasting Channel became the second television station to provide sign language interpretation for news broadcasts.

The government supported the right of persons with disabilities to vote and participate in civic affairs; five seats in parliament were reserved for representatives of persons with disabilities. Government agencies responsible for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities included the Ministry of State for Disabled Persons and the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MGLSD), but both lacked sufficient funding to undertake or support any significant initiatives. The parliamentary Equal Opportunities Committee, created in 2006, ensures the compliance of all laws that protect persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Civil strife in the north and east and ongoing conflict in the Karamoja region resulted in deaths and injuries.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Homosexuals faced widespread discrimination and legal restrictions. It is illegal for homosexuals to engage in sexual acts, based on a legal provision that criminalizes "carnal acts against the order of nature" with a penalty of life imprisonment.

Public resentment against homosexuality sparked demonstrations and significant public debate during the year. The government took a strong position against the practice. A local NGO, Sexual Minorities in Uganda, protested several members' alleged harassment by police for their vocal stand against sexual discrimination.

On September 10, the Red Pepper tabloid published a list of 40 first names of alleged homosexual men residing in Kampala. There were no confirmed reports of arrests, as originally reported, based on a similar list published by the same tabloid in August 2006.

International and local NGOs, in cooperation with the government, sponsored public awareness campaigns that aimed to eliminate the stigma of HIV/AIDS. Counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS was free and available at health centers and local NGOs across the country. Counselors encouraged patients to be tested with their partners and family so that they all received information about living with HIV/AIDS. Persons living with HIV/AIDS formed support groups to promote awareness in their communities.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

Since the MGLSD instituted a ban on registration of new central labor unions in July, the law allows workers to form unions, but all unions must be registered as part of one of two existing central unions, the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) and the Confederation of Trade Unions (COFTU). The ban followed a leadership struggle between the top leaders of NOTU and COFTU. Workers generally exercised the right of association in practice, with the exception of many "essential" government employees, including police, army, and management-level officials. The law also makes it a criminal offense for an employer to obstruct the right of association; however, the government generally did not enforce this provision in practice. For example, employers in the fish industry and hotel companies were not penalized for prohibiting workers from unionizing, and the government failed to enforce the rights of some employees to join unions in newly privatized industries and factories. Union officials estimated that over 500,000 workers were unionized, representing approximately 5 percent of working-age citizens.

There were reports that antiunion discrimination incidents in the hotel and textile sectors went uninvestigated. There continued to be reports that several private companies in the fisheries industry urged workers not to take part in unionization efforts during the year.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference and provides for collective bargaining; however, the government did not protect these rights in practice. Some employers ignored the legal requirement to enter into collective bargaining agreements with registered unions. There are no export processing zones.

No public service unions, including medical staff and teachers, were allowed to negotiate their salaries and employment terms. The government fixed the terms and conditions for all civil service workers. In January workers at Steel Rolling in Jinja started to negotiate conditions of employment, which they had not been allowed to do in 2006.

The law provides for the right to strike and workers exercised this right; however, the government did not always protect the right. Government policy required labor and management to make "every effort to reconcile labor disputes before resorting to strike action." Police forcibly arrested persons engaged in organizing strikes. On June 5, police in Mityana District arrested nine workers of Kakonde Tea Estate for allegedly organizing a strike to protest poor working conditions; property was damaged and one manager was assaulted during the strike. Five of those arrested were released without charges. On June 18, a court in Mityana District charged four suspects with five counts of malicious damage, inciting violence, theft, arson, and causing bodily harm. The suspects were granted bail, and the case was scheduled for hearing, but the suspects disappeared and were missing at year's end.

The General Assembly of Makerere University Academic Staff Association and the government agreed in January that Makerere University Council would pay lecturers' salaries, resolving a disagreement that had triggered a November 2006 strike.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there were reports that such practices occurred, particularly prison labor. While the law does not expressly prohibit prison labor, it states that such labor becomes forced if the worker is "hired out to or placed at the disposal of a private individual, company, or association."

Local NGOs and the UHRC reported that forced labor continued to be a serious problem in local prisons countrywide. Prison officials hired out prisoners to work on private farms and construction sites where the prisoners were often overworked. Prison officials routinely supplemented their meager wages with cash crops grown by prisoners on the prison grounds. Male prisoners performed arduous physical labor while female prisoners produced marketable handicrafts such as woven basketry. Juvenile prisoners performed manual labor, often for 12 hours per day. Compensation, when paid, generally was very low.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits employers from hiring workers below the age of 18; however, statutory orders issued by the MGLSD permit the employment of children between the ages of 14 and 18, and 13-year-olds are allowed to engage in "light work" provided it does not interfere with education. Children under the age of 12 are prohibited from being employed in any business or workplace, and all children are prohibited from being employed between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. Nevertheless, child labor was common, especially in the informal sector.

Demographics contributed to the problem of child labor; more than half of the population was under 18 years of age. Many children left school and went into agricultural or domestic work to help meet expenses or perform the work of absent or infirm parents, a situation common throughout the country. The problem was particularly acute among the large orphan population. A joint International Labor Organization (ILO) and MGLSD survey, released in 2005, estimated that approximately 2.7 million children were employed.

In urban areas children sold small items on the street, worked in shops, begged for money, and were involved in the commercial sex industry. Children were also employed in the tea-harvesting sector, sugarcane fields, commercial farming of tobacco and rice, crop farming, and stone quarries. The MGLSD reported new incidents of the worst forms of child labor, including children involved in illicit activities such as cross-border smuggling. Government officials noted that child exploitation in the informal sector was of particular concern and was difficult to investigate. Children were known to be working as subsistence farmers, domestic servants, and prostitutes.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that the UPDF used former LRA child soldiers on reconnaissance and intelligence missions, nor were there new reports of the LRA abducting children into virtual slavery.

National level institutions responsible for enforcing child labor laws and policies include the National Council of Children, the police force's Child and Family Protection Unit, the industrial court, and the MGLSD; however, financial constraints limited efforts. The MGLSD continued to offer social services to children working in the worst forms of child labor and other target groups, and it conducted training for staff, local leaders, and district labor inspectors. Sixty MGLSD district labor

officers reported on child labor issues at the local level. The government coordinated its efforts to stop child labor through the National Steering Committee on Child Labor, which included representatives of the MGLSD, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Local Government, the Federation of Uganda Employers, the National Organization of Trade Unions, NGOs, journalists, and academics. Due to lack of funds and logistic support, officials have not conducted child labor inspections since 2004.

The government organized a number of child labor awareness workshops, disseminated printed information, and sponsored radio and television discussions to educate the public on child labor issues. The government also cooperated with the ILO, foreign governments, and NGOs in several initiatives to combat child labor, including the education and reintegration of children into their communities. Several human rights NGOs continued programs to remove children from hazardous work situations.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The Employment Act includes provisions for district labor inspectors to "secure the enforcement of legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work"; however, no inspections were carried out during the year, due in part to financial constraints.

The minimum legal wage was \$3.60 (6,000 shillings) per month, a rate set in 1984 that did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family and was not effectively enforced. The government and the private sector negotiated a new rate in 2003; however, no minimum wage legislation had been passed by year's end.

In industries that employed workers on an hourly basis, the normal workweek was 40 hours. The legal maximum workweek is 48 hours; however, exceptions can be made with agreement of the employer and employee. The law provides for an employee who works in excess of 48 hours per a week to be remunerated at the minimum rate of 1.5 times the normal hourly rate and two times the hourly rate on public holidays. The law also states that working hours may not exceed 10 hours per day or 56 hours per week, including overtime hours; however, an employee may work in excess of 10 hours a day if the average number of hours over a period of three weeks does not exceed 10 hours per day or 56 hours per week. Employees are granted a 30-minute break for every eight-hour work shift. For every four months of continuous employment, an employee is entitled to seven days of paid annual leave per calendar year. Many industries paid workers annual increments or bonuses as payoffs to avoid overtime.

The law establishes occupational health and safety standards, and the MGLSD's Department of Occupational Health was responsible for enforcement of occupational safety regulations. In practice inspections were very rare, primarily due to the lack of vehicles and funding for inspection trips, and standards were not effectively enforced. The law also provides workers the right to remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment and, unlike in previous year, there were no reported cases of workers being dismissed for refusal to perform dangerous work. Strong unions in certain dangerous industries protected some such workers; however, there were reports of fatal accidents at several construction projects during the year.

