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### **Uganda: Four human rights defenders arbitrarily arrested during a peaceful protest and later released on bail**

On 14 December 2022, human rights defenders **Barigye Bob**, **Ivan Kabale**, **Musoke Hamis Walusimbi** and **Ssemwanga Jackson**, who had been released on police bond two days earlier, reported to Kampala Central police station as instructed, but were again detained and brought to Court. The four human rights defenders were officially charged with “common nuisance” and then released on bail.

On 9 December 2022, human rights defenders [Barigye Bob](#), [Ivan Kabale](#), [Musoke Hamis Walusimbi](#) and [Ssemwanga Jackson](#) were detained without an arrest warrant by police officers at Kampala Road after being involved in a peaceful protest. Three of the human rights defenders were detained at Kampala Central police station. Ssemwanga Jackson was kept at an unknown location until the morning of the 12 December 2022, when he was then brought to Kampala Central police station by the authorities. The four human right defenders were subsequently released at 12:00 on 12 December 2022.

Ssemwanga Jackson is a human right defender who has been a campaigner against bad governance, corruption and an environmental defender. He is affiliated with the Alternative movement. Kabale Ivan is a human rights defender who has been involved in campaigns on electoral democracy, human rights and environmental rights in Uganda. Musoke Hamisi Walusimbi is an environmental human rights defender and the Mother Nature Conservation Initiative executive secretary. Mother Nature Conservation Initiative is a non-profit organisation working on environmental and human rights. Barigye Bob is an educationist, climate change and environmental human rights defender involved in the campaign against the East African Crude Oil Pipeline.

The four human rights defenders Barigye Bob, Ivan Kabale, Musoke Hamis Walusimbi and Ssemwanga Jackson, are members of the global campaign *Stop the East African Crude Oil Pipeline* (StopEACOP). The global campaign is led by an alliance of local groups, communities, and African and international organizations who protest against the construction of the East African Crude Oil pipeline (EACOP). This consists of a proposed 1,445-kilometre heated pipeline that will transport oil from Hoima, Uganda, to the port of Tanga in Tanzania. EACOP faces significant resistance from local communities and civil society organizations as the government has seized land and displaced thousands of people to construct the pipeline. Rural communities are affected as financial compensation for expropriating their land has yet to be fairly decided. The development threatens local communities’ safe access to schools, and could jeopardize the safe supply of food and water in the area. Moreover, there have been concerns about the negative environmental impact that the project could have.

On 14 December 2022, human rights defenders **Barigye Bob**, **Ivan Kabale**, **Musoke Hamis Walusimbi** and **Ssemwanga Jackson**, who had been released on police bond two days earlier, reported to Kampala Central police station as instructed, but were again detained and brought to Court. The four human rights defenders were release on bail and officially charged with “common nuisance”, they are expected to appear in Court on 19 January 2023.

On 9 December 2022, Barigye Bob, Ivan Kabale, Musoke Hamis Walusimbi and Ssemwanga Jackson participated in a peaceful protest. The human rights defenders were going to the National

Environment Management Authority (NEMA) to demand a re-evaluation of the environmental damage caused by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline, its impact on climate change and the human rights abuses the project has caused. In the middle of the protest, the police violently dispersed them, and detained the four human right defenders. Though they have not been formally charged, they were told they were being accused of “public nuisance” before being released on police bond on 12 December 2022.

The three human rights defenders were arrested on Kampala Road and were brought to Kampala central police station. During the arrest, the human rights defender Barigye Jackson was dragged on the road by police officers and is now suffering from a dislocated shoulder. A fourth human rights defender, Ssemwanga Jackson, was last seen at the demonstration before being brought to Kampala Central police station. On 12 December 2022, Ssemwanga Jackson was brought to Kampala Central police station, after being detained in an unknown location from 9 December 2022. It is reported his health is deteriorating, with the human rights defender having been deprived of food and water during his detention. The family and his legal representatives were unaware of his whereabouts and were deeply concerned for his safety.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the arbitrary arrest and detention of the four human rights defenders as their arrest and detention appears to be based on their legitimate and peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of assembly as per the 1995 Constitution of Uganda and rights under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Uganda is a signatory. It is of particular concern that Ssemwanga Jackson was reportedly held at an undisclosed location for three days.

#### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Uganda to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against Barigye Bob, Ivan Kabale, Musoke Hamis and Ssemwanga Jackson, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being judicially harassed solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of assembly;
2. Publicly clarify the legal situation and respect the demand for dialogue on the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP);
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Uganda and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Uganda are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including harassment, arrests and threats.