



EAST AFRICAN
CRUDE OIL PIPELINE
HOST COMMUNITIES

Kinziranfumbi town council - Kikuube district

Tel: +256 772 938531 Email: info@eacophc.org Website: www.eacophc.org

May 8, 2026

East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Host Communities
Open Letter to H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni on the State of Civic Space for
Grassroots Human Rights and Environmental Defenders in Uganda's Albertine Region

Your Excellency,

We, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Host Communities, together with grassroots civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), respectfully call upon you to take urgent action to address the escalating attacks on civic space and the increasing intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests, and criminalization of grassroots environmental and human rights defenders in Uganda's Albertine region.

Grassroots civil society organizations play an indispensable role in Uganda's development. They provide essential services to communities, promote democratic governance, protect land and environmental rights, advocate for human rights, and amplify the voices of marginalized and project-affected communities. Their work contributes significantly to accountable governance, sustainable development, and peaceful citizen participation.

Uganda's legal framework, anchored in the 1995 Constitution, guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of conscience, expression, movement, religion, peaceful assembly, and association. Article 29(1)(e) specifically protects every person's right to form and join associations, including civic organizations, trade unions, and other lawful groups, while safeguarding their autonomy to pursue their legitimate objectives without undue interference.

Despite these constitutional guarantees, civic space in Uganda has continued to shrink. In recent years, several laws—including the NGO (Amendment) Act, 2024; the Public Order Management Act, 2013; the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2013; the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2002; the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act, 2022; and the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023—have created an increasingly restrictive operating environment for civil society. These laws have imposed burdensome registration and reporting requirements, expanded state powers to suspend or deregister organizations, facilitated the freezing of bank accounts, and restricted access to funding. Organizations engaged in environmental protection, land rights, democratic governance, and human rights advocacy have become frequent targets of intimidation, surveillance, judicial harassment, and online and offline attacks by both state and non-state actors.

The situation is particularly alarming in Uganda's oil-producing Albertine region, where grassroots environmental and human rights defenders working with communities affected by oil and gas developments continue to face arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, intimidation, threats, and excessive restrictions on their freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. Community meetings are frequently disrupted, peaceful protests are suppressed, and defenders are criminalized simply for exercising their constitutional rights and advocating for transparency, environmental justice, fair compensation, and respect for community rights.

These actions undermine Uganda's constitutional principles, weaken democratic governance, and erode public trust in state institutions. A vibrant and independent civil society is not a threat to national development; rather, it is an essential partner in promoting accountability, protecting human rights, fostering inclusive development, and ensuring that large-scale investments are implemented in a manner that respects the rights and dignity of affected communities.

We therefore respectfully urge Your Excellency to take immediate steps to safeguard civic space, uphold the rule of law, and ensure that all Ugandans—including grassroots environmental and human rights defenders—can freely exercise their constitutional rights without fear of intimidation, harassment, or retaliation.

The future of Uganda's democracy and sustainable development depends on protecting the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and ensuring that civil society can operate independently, safely, and effectively.

Respectfully,

East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) Host Communities

On behalf of grassroots communities, environmental defenders, human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and community-based organizations in Uganda's Albertine region.