

THE RESPONSE OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND IMPUNITY IN KAMPALA UGANDA DURING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS

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AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**



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DECLARATION

I, Nambache Alexia hereby declare that this dissertation submitted to the school of social sciences, Uganda Christian University for award of degree of Governance and international relations is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other institution for any award.

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation was done under my supervision and is now ready for submission for examination as a requirement for the award of Degree of Bachelor of Governance and International Relations at Uganda Christian University

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Date.....05...../.....05...../.....2026

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(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother who advised, supported and mentored me throughout my education up to university level. Above all, I thank God for guidance and provision towards completion of this dissertation.

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I am greatly indebted to Mr.Bukenya Liino my supervisor for his effective supervision, dedication, availability and professional advice.

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ABSTRACT

This paper has explored how the international organizations have responded to violation of human rights and impunity in electoral campaigns in Kampala, Uganda. The objective of the study was to investigate the manner in which international organizations react to the abuse of human rights during campaigns, the factors which limit their effectiveness, the effects of impunity on the safety of human rights, and the prevalent types of abuses that are witnessed during campaigns. The research problem was based on what was found to be the gap between the commitment of the government of Uganda to the international human rights standards and the prevalence of widespread human rights violations and impunity during electoral campaigns despite international attention and intervention.

The research design adopted was a qualitative research design and was conducted in Kampala City, in areas that are often related to political activities and election related tensions. Semi-structured interviews with key informants, review of the documentary, and analysis of the case study, were used as data collection methods.

The results have shown that the electoral campaigns in Kampala have always been marked by a high level of violation of human rights involving arbitrary arrests, intimidation, excessive use of force, suppression of the freedoms of assembly and expression, harassment of journalists, and targeting of the opposition supporters. The research also determined that such abuses are systemic and are often enabled by the selective enforcing of laws and politicization of state institutions. Despite the active efforts of international bodies including the United Nations, African Union and international non-governmental organizations to monitor, document and condemn these abuses, their efforts have not been very effective in holding them accountable.

Also, the findings revealed that impunity is perpetuated by poor accountability mechanisms, executive interference on the judiciary system, lack of political will, and limited enforcement powers of international organizations. Civil society groups were named as significant players in the documentation of abuses and advocacy of accountability, but their performance is limited due to restrictive laws, intimidation, and limited space of operation. The research concludes that the only way to address the issue of human rights violation during the electoral campaigns is by ensuring that there are stronger domestic accountability institutions, better protection of civil liberties, and more coherent and sustained international involvement.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Uganda has had a history of issues with regards to safety of human rights in the electoral season. The challenges may occur in the environment of ensuring the public order and security, especially in the city. International and regional organizations have continuously been worried about the nature of elections and upholding civil liberties. In this paper, the researcher will discuss the role played by international institutions in responding to alleged human rights abuses during the electoral period in Kampala, Uganda.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The electoral environment in Uganda has over the years been linked with issues pertaining to the safeguarding of human rights especially during campaign seasons. Different human rights organizations, such as the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Human Rights Watch have reported cases of force, arrests, and limitations of civil liberties as part of election processes. These reports indicate that there are common obstacles in the broader electoral and governance system (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Since the 1980s, people who have suffered as a result of election-related violence have complained of being unable to get access to justice and accountability. As scholarly analysis indicates, the international responses to such situations are often informed by the considerations related to state sovereignty and strategic interests. Realist theory in international relations underlines the fact that states have an inclination to prioritize national interests and regional stability, which may affect the level and nature of external involvement in human rights issues (Waltz, 1979; Kagoro, 2018).

This work mainly relies on the realist theory to explain the way international actors react to issues of human rights during the election periods, and how the concept of state sovereignty, strategic interests, and regional balances influence external involvement (Waltz, 1979). Nevertheless, the place of international institutions and norms cannot be fully explained by realism. Liberal theory emphasizes the efforts by multilateral institutions, law, and diplomatic instruments, to promote accountability by cooperation, but with limited effectiveness due to lax enforcement and dependence on state approval.

The constructivist views also come in handy in the way norms, identities and dominant discourses about stability and legitimacy impact on both domestic reactions and international responses. Empirical data found in the election observation reports and human rights documentation is found to contain recurrent concerns alongside generally consistent and restraint international response. This combination approach gives a balanced platform of how limited the effects of international responses are, without having to refer to a single theoretical explanation.

Uganda has often been referred to as practicing within a hybrid system of governance which incorporates formal electoral processes with a robust system of state control, especially during election years. Security institutions are very important in ensuring that the society is being governed, but concerns have been raised about the lack of oversight and accountability in some situations (Amnesty International, 2020). Moreover, the international engagement is also subject to more geopolitical considerations, such as security cooperation and development partnerships, and regional principles such as non-interference may constrain the external intervention (Higazi, 2020).

Local civil society groups have assisted in the list of human rights issues and civil education programs. They tend to exist in limited spaces, however, which influence their advocacy abilities and the ability to remain engaged (Taylor, 2022).

The paper explores major concepts surrounding accountability and impunity in elections. It tries to know why the international mechanisms including international legal frameworks and multilateral resolutions do not necessarily translate to effective remedies to the population affected. The study goes further to examine how the violence that follows elections can shape the result of the governance process and how far the international response can be influenced by the broad strategic and diplomatic considerations and not necessarily by the obligation to respect human rights (Mamdani, 2014; Besseling, 2019).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research problem was based on the fact that there has been a significant disconnect between the so-called commitment to human rights by the international community and the challenges in actually preventing, addressing, and holding accountable widespread human rights violations and impunity in Uganda, especially at the time of electoral campaigns. In spite of the fact that Uganda is a signatory to some of the most important international and regional human rights agreements such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter, the consecutive election periods have always been accompanied with state-sponsored violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions of the opposition members and journalists, torture, and suppression of some of the most important fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association.

Widespread Impunity that has been depicted by notable lack of accountability still goes on perpetrators in the security forces and government which is often facilitated by the political and judicial cover. The government has failed on several occasions to take any credible actions to investigate and deal with serious abuses to create an environment where future violations can take place.

Limited Effectiveness of International Mechanisms, international bodies, such as the UN and the African Union, EAC issue reports and statements and sometimes impose limited sanctions (e.g., the US suspending Uganda of AGOA due to human rights concerns). However, these actions have yet to lead to substantial improvements in the human rights situation. According to the observers, the difficulties included weak enforcement mechanisms and the community of nations split.

The reaction of international actors to the violation of human rights influences the overall human rights climate, the quality of the democratic process, the activity of civil society, and creates an atmosphere of fear of political opponents and human rights defenders.

One of the main issues is that there is a great gap between the international standards of human rights, which Uganda has supposedly accepted, and the current problems of their implementation in the country. This problem shows the difficulty of successfully closing the implementation gap.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the role of international bodies in addressing Human Rights abuses during electoral campaigns in Kampala Uganda and how they have responded to this issue.
- To analyse the factors contributing to the perceived failure of the international bodies regarding this issue.
- To examine the impact of impunity on human rights in Kampala Uganda.
- To find out the human rights abuses occurring in Kampala Uganda during electoral campaigns.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the role of international bodies in addressing Human Rights abuses during electoral campaigns in Kampala Uganda and how they have responded to this issue?
- What are the factors contributing to the perceived failure of the international bodies regarding this issue?
- What is the impact of impunity on human rights in Kampala Uganda?
- What are the human rights abuses occurring in Kampala Uganda during electoral campaigns?

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research was conducted in Kampala, Uganda (primarily in such areas as Nakawa, Kololo and Kawempe). It was oriented, on the electoral campaigns and the human rights issues involved in the electoral campaigns, specifically the violations of the human rights of the opposition candidates, their supporters, and the members of the civil society. The research was conducted to give an insight into certain cases of human rights violations during The research has been conducted over a period of about three months.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE

The research will be used as a reference point by researchers and practitioners interested in human rights in Uganda and other countries. The study results will be used to make policy adjustments and increase the actions of international organizations in response to human rights violations, allowing them to take more effective measures.

The study will also assist in advocacy by human rights groups, as it will provide valuable information and data to support their campaigns. It will also help in gaining a better insight into impunity by illuminating on its causes and effects, which can be used to inform future interventions.

1.7 CASE STUDIES

Inclusively use specific case studies of electoral campaigns in Kampala Uganda, and analyse the response (or lack thereof) by international entities to specific incidents of violence or repression.

Civil Society and Grassroots Movements.

Emphasize the involvement of the Ugandan civil society organizations and grassroots movements in their advocacy of human rights and the issues that they have to face in their quest to find international support.

Comparative Analysis

Compare the situation of Uganda to other countries which have had to deal with the same issue in their political campaigns and evaluate what can be learned to respond internationally.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

The literature review explores the literature pertaining to the human rights abuses in Kampala Uganda during election campaigns and the reaction of international bodies. The review is divided into major themes, such as nature of human rights abuses, the role of international organizations, the persistence of impunity, and the efficiency of monitoring mechanisms.

2.1 Nature of Human Rights Abuses in Kampala Uganda.

Literature reveals that, in most cases, electoral campaigns in Kampala Uganda are usually characterized by rampant human rights abuses. According to Kumar (2019), violence, torture, and extrajudicial killings have been part of the methods used by security forces to suppress the voices of dissent. According to the report by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (2020), there are systematic abuses around elections that include intimidation of opposition candidates, harassment of political activists, and disruption of peaceful assembly. Equally, Amnesty International (2021) criticized the use of military and police forces by the Ugandan government in the electoral processes, noting that, in this context, the connection between electoral violence and major decreases in civic freedoms are evident.

International Bodies and their responses.

A number of studies examine how international bodies may help in resolving human rights violations in Kampala Uganda. Smith (2020) reports that the United Nations has passed several resolutions denouncing abuses in Kampala Uganda but these resolutions have been largely ignored by the government. Adeyemi (2021) criticizes the non-interference doctrine of the African Union because he believes that it allows member states to act with impunity. Moreover, the East African Community (EAC) has been criticized as being ineffectual in holding countries accountable over such violations, often focusing on political stability over human rights advocacy (Mugisha, 2022).

Impunity and its Effect.

Much literature has been developed about the continuity of impunity against human rights violators in Uganda. Human rights activists such as Byesigye (2020) have alleged that the absence of accountability is due to the deep-rooted political patronage and complicity of the judicial institution. Ndala (2021) discusses the systemic vulnerabilities of law enforcement and notes that most instances of abuse are not addressed because of a culture of fear and intimidation of the legal process. This impunity does not only extend abuses but also weakens the processes of democracy as political leaders feel empowered enough to take advantage of dissent without fear of any retribution (Lwanga, 2022).

Mechanisms of Monitoring and Accountability.

The effectiveness of monitoring mechanisms by international bodies has been critically analyzed. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has encountered serious difficulties in the pursuit of cases involving human rights violations in Uganda, with many authors reporting that it is limited in its jurisdiction and is constrained by politics (Kiiza, 2020). On the contrary, Kyagulanyi (2021) highlights the importance of local civil society organizations to document the abuses, regardless of the risk that they face. Research indicates that the ability of international organizations to facilitate actual responsibility is limited without extensive monitoring systems (Lemarchand, 2022).

Comparisons with Other Contexts.

The comparative analyses provide information on the situation in Uganda in relation to other settings of electoral violence and human rights abuses. As an example, the comparative study of the Ugandan and the Kenyan post-election violence (Nganga, 2021) shows that both countries respond similarly to the violence and that the international organizations fail to address the situation effectively. The two countries show how geopolitical interests can override human rights efforts, as foreign powers tend to conduct their relations with said countries based on the strategic priorities, but not on the results of the human rights efforts (Obeng, 2021).

Conclusion

The reviewed literature demonstrates the complex interaction between factors that have led to the failure of international bodies in dealing with human rights abuses in Uganda during political campaigns. Although the government-approved violence is widespread, the accountability mechanisms are not effective enough, and the role of international organizations is still limited by the political and structural factors. This synthesis illuminates the virtue of greater advocacy, more collaboration among civil society, and more effective international frameworks to address the impunity of human rights violations in Uganda.

2.2 Examine the history of political campaigns in Uganda, including major elections (e.g., general elections, parliamentary elections) and the human rights issues that they present.

Political campaigns in Uganda history.

The initial elections in Uganda were the direct elections of the Legislative Council (LEGCO) in October 1958. Behind these elections was the boycott of the exercise by the Buganda Kingdom in addition to a lawsuit filed against the Protectorate government in a failed attempt to stop them. Although the open violence was wanting, the tensions created by the boycott by Buganda, were an indication of a controversial future of the electoral politics in the country. Later, the election of 1961 wherein the Democratic Party (DP) triumphed in the pre-independence elections in the country, was marred with violence as the Buganda Kingdom tried to frustrate the electoral prospects of DP in the region.

So strong was the Kingdom, that they campaigned to make their subjects not vote. This forced the Protectorate government to pass the Elections 1961 (Prevention of Intimidation) Bill giving the Governor powers to detain any person who intimidated people from registering to vote. In the end, DP won with a slim margin. Another time DP won was in the pre-independence elections of 1962 but was denied a chance to assume an office by a coalition of UPC and Kabaka Yekka (KY). KY did not want to undertake direct elections but instead instructed the Buganda Lukiiko to nominate its Members of Parliament.

The 1961 and 1962 elections were bitter, and intense was the rivalry to such an extent that political opponents set each other ablaze by burning their farms and property. Ethnic rivalry was also high and those who supported UPC in the north of Uganda considered DP and the Buganda region as their enemies. The people were politically divided along religious lines: Catholics for DP and Protestants for UPC and they considered each other as enemies. In the mid-1960s, Obote, the prime minister, abrogated the Independence Constitution, and made the replacement the Pigeonhole Constitution, and within a short period of time supplanted the power of the presidency. In an effort to further consolidate his power, he also ended traditional kingdoms and chiefdoms.

All these unilateral actions fueled an already polarized and poisoned political atmosphere in the country, pitting one tribe against another, and religious denominations against each other. A state of emergency was declared on the whole country and things came into the limelight when there was an assassination attempt on the president Obote in 1969. He had by that time destroyed the opposition by buying off opposition members of parliament, and enticing most of them to join his party.

Since 1962 and 1971 when Obote was overthrown by a military coup, there had been no election. The military rule was firstly welcomed since the degree of dissatisfaction in the nation was at the boiling point. Between 1971-1979 the reign of terror, worsened the internecine political intrigues. Every sphere of civilian life was dominated by armed forces and intelligence services of Amin.

Since there was no chance of any elective politics, political parties were outlawed; violence became the primary mode of oppression of dissent, and mass killings with state sanction became the norm. Amin was finally overthrown in 1979 by Tanzanian People's Defense Forces and Ugandan fighting forces.

With the resulting political anarchy that followed the overthrow of Idi Amin, there were a few interim regimes under the umbrella of Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF). In 1980, the UNLF military wing, which was the most powerful, organized elections, which were allegedly meant to bring about civilian rule but in reality, they were designed to bring Obote back to power. Massive state organized violence; human life loss; and arrest of opposition leaders; all created a sense of fear despite the fact that Milton Obote was being hyped as the saviour of Uganda.

The nation was submerged by a five-year civil war in which it is estimated that 300,000 people died. 38 The common Ugandan citizen in all these power struggles suffered state-sponsored terror and insecurity, loss of life and a ruined economy. Such a situation is similar to what psychologists have termed as obligatory violence, a state in which the perpetrators of violence do so repeatedly, and tend to perceive it as a normal means of gaining and sustaining power.

The violence took a different dimension after the 1980 elections which were rigged. The National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) which evolved into the most formidable force against the Obote regime, came up with a manifesto referred to as the Ten-Point Programme. The first point was the restoration of democracy where the views and opinions of the electorate on how they were to be ruled was to be respected.

Shortly after ascending to power in 1986, the NRM government was on a mission to make a new Constitution to Uganda. On 21 December 1988, the then Ugandan legislature, the National Resistance Council (NRC) passed Statute No.5 of 1988, which established a Constitutional Commission tasked with the development of a new Constitution. Its mandate of the Commission was to consult the people and make proposals towards a constitution based on a national consensus. The end result of that exercise in totality was the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution. Article 1 of the Constitution says that power is vested in the people and that the people shall declare their will and consent on who shall govern them and how they shall be governed, through regular, free and fair elections of their representatives ...

The Constitution was created to avoid all the pitfalls that had led to all the violence that had characterized past regimes including electoral violence. However, it is well known that elections that have taken place since the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution are not free and fair and free of violence. The most noticeable of these is the regular participation of almost all arms of the security forces in the electoral process in the guise of ensuring that the elections are well guarded against domestic and foreign enemies or other malevolent practices. The issue is that the facts do not support the claims of the government.

Since the introduction of multiparty politics in 2005, the political campaigns in Uganda have continuously been characterized by violence, intimidation, and abuse of human rights, with the opposition taking the brunt of repression by state security agencies. One such trend is that the incumbent National Resistance Movement (NRM) has been used to exploit its power to silence dissent and remain in power.

Pre-multiparty era (before 2005)

Uganda had a no party system; it was governed by President Yoweri Museveni who had ruled the country since 1986. This enabled the NRM to organize and gain traction and other parties were not allowed to compete in real politics, which limited real political competition. This was strengthened by the system of individual merit that was enshrined in the 1995 Constitution, which gave NRM an initial edge when multiparty politics came back in 2005.

Elections under multiparty system (2006, 2011, 2016)

The shift towards a multiparty system could not help much in the improvement of the human rights climate during elections.

Violence and intimidation: Campaigns were often marked by claims of vote-rigging, intimidation and violence.

Abuse of fundamental freedoms: Human Rights Watch has reported rampant violation of fundamental freedoms which include free assembly, free expression and free association in these election cycles.

Lifting of term limits: The 2005 constitutional amendment to lift presidential term limits, served only to entrench the power of President Museveni and became a thorn in the flesh of human rights observers.

The 2021 general election

The human right groups and international observers condemned the 2021 election that saw the incumbent Museveni re-elected against his main challenger Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine) in a case that was marked by widespread abuses.

Targeting opposition and journalists: The security forces arrested and beat opposition supporters and journalists, disrupted rallies, and even killed protesters. Protests resulted in the killing of at least 54 people in protests over the arrest of Bobi Wine in November 2020.

Limiting digital rights: The government cut off the internet and blocked social networking sites during the election period, thus impairing the freedom of communication and reporting.

Attacks on civil society: The government indefinitely suspended 54 civil society organizations, including human rights and election monitoring groups, in August 2021.

The path to 2026

The situation concerning human rights is still unstable, with Uganda on the brink of the 2026 elections.

UPDF Bill 2025: The recent passing of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) Amendment Bill 2025 has raised serious concerns. It extends the jurisdiction of the military court to prosecute civilians, a move which the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) believes goes against international human rights obligations and compromises the rule of law.

Continuing challenges: The World Movement of Democracy cautions that the upcoming 2025-2026 elections cycle is likely to be reflective or even worse than the previous cycles of arbitrary arrests, intimidation of voters, and opposition suppression.

Oppression of opposition is still going on: The leading opposition figures such as Bobi Wine and Kizza Besigye are still experiencing oppression by the ruling regime, including arbitrary arrests and harassment by security agents.

Human rights issues relating to it.

Human rights issues in the Ugandan political campaigns are often based on state security forces employing excessive force, stifling free expression and assembly, arbitrarily arresting their critics and opponents, and targeting journalists and civil society. The international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have well documented these issues.

Use of excessive force and violence.

The post 1995 elections in Uganda have been characterized by violence and impunity especially during the controversial elections where the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) has been in stiff competition.

2021 general election: In November 2020, a minimum of 54 people were killed by security forces in Kampala amid protests over the arrest of then-presidential candidate, Robert Kyugulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine. An investigation by BBC revealed that some of the victims were unarmed civilians who had been unfairly shot.

Beatings and intimidation: Security forces have physically beaten up protesters and opposition supporters at protests and rallies. Indicatively, in February 2021, at least 20 journalists covering a petition filed by Kyigulanyi were beaten by military police, leaving some of them in the hospital.

Crackdown of freedom of assembly and expression.

Political meetings have been curtailed using laws such as the Public Order Management Act (POMA) and the Computer Misuse Act, to silence the online critics and restrict free speech.

Indiscriminate restrictions on rallies: POMA allows police to allow or disallow public gatherings. It has been applied to stop or postpone opposition protests due to technicalities in the procedure where NRM events are held without any interference. Security forces prematurely ended rallies by Kyagulanyi in September 2023, accusing him of inciting violence.

Silencing of critics on the internet: Posters on social media have been used to bring charges against critics of the government under the Computer Misuse Act.

In July 2024, a 24-year-old was convicted of six years in prison over offenses of offending the president and his son on the social network Tik Tok.

In 2022 a law student was arrested and detained five days without access to his family or a lawyer over a tweet parodying a police spokesperson.

Shutdowns of Internet and social media.

During elections, both access to internet and social media have been blocked or restricted to curb communication and suppress dissent, both affecting the ordinary citizens and media coverage.

2021 election internet blackout: During the five days surrounding the 2021 election, the government ordered an internet blackout and blocked social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. The blackout also affected the election observers to report on the ground, and a subsequent court case claimed that it had violated the rights of citizens to access information.

Facebook ban: Following the 2021 election, Facebook was banned indefinitely in Uganda after it took down pro-government accounts for "inauthentic behavior." This limitation still applies.

Attack on journalists and the media.

The press that report on anti-government movements and human rights violations have been threatened, harassed, and even killed, and the media that is critical of the government have been censored and punished.

Journalists beaten and shot at: In the 2021 election campaign, several journalists who covered opposition rallies were beaten or fired at using rubber bullets by police. In one of the cases, a police official had threatened journalists covering violent protests that police would beat them up in their own best interest in order to make them realize that they should not be present.

Media raids: The security agencies have stormed and seized gadgets belonging to the media houses. An example is when in March 2022, armed police and military officers raided and arrested nine employees of the online television station The Alternative DigiTalk.

Civil society organization (CSOs) harassment.

The government has been employing regulations to limit the activities of CSOs, especially those related to human rights, governance and election monitoring.

NGO Suspension: In August 2021, the government suddenly suspended the operations of 54 CSOs including human rights and election monitoring organizations on the basis of non-compliance with regulations.

Arrest of NGO leaders: In what was regarded as a politically motivated attack on his organization, Chapter Four Uganda, human rights lawyer Nicholas Opiyo was arrested in December 2020 during the election campaign and accused of money laundering.

2.3 Nature of Human Rights Abuses

Provide specific examples of human rights violations that take place during campaigns (e.g., violence, intimidation, harassment of opposition, restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly) and classify types of abuse.

The 2021 general election marked the start of the most severe human rights violations in Uganda, with the security forces being the most serious offenders against opposition parties, activists, and journalists. These abuses can be categorized into various groups, such as the unnecessary use of force, intimidation, as well as a strong restraint of the basic freedoms.

Violence, illegal murders and torture.

Security forces often exercise lethal force and other inhuman means to quell any dissent during campaign periods, often with the pretext of enforcing either COVID-19 or public order restrictions.

Unreasonable and deadly force: During protests that erupted in November 2020, security forces killed at least 54 people demonstrating against the arrest of then-presidential candidate Robert Kyugulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine. The witnesses have claimed that the police and military counterattacked with tear gas and live ammunition. An ensuing police inquiry into the murders was never brought into the limelight, and no individual has been held responsible.

Arbitrary arrests and torture: Opposition members, especially of the National Unity Platform (NUP) are regularly subject to arbitrary arrest. These detentions in most cases are combined with torture. Some NUP supporters released post-2021 election reported being beaten using sticks, having their toenails pulled out, and being shot in the legs as they were forced to confession of committing crimes.

Enforced disappearance: Dozen of opposition supporters, mostly of the NUP, were forcibly disappeared during the 2021 campaign. While some were later released, their whereabouts and safety were unknown for long periods. There are those family members who were compensated by the government, however, the cases lack full transparency and justice.

Illegal trial by a military court: In one case 49 supporters of the NUP were arrested and taken to a military court, but they were set free on bail by a civilian court, only to be re-arrested and brought before a military court. They were accused of being in unlawful possession of ammunition, which allowed them to be kept in custody without being charged.

Intimidation and harassing of opposition.

Systematic harassment and intimidation are used to paralyze opposition movements and their leaders.

Cracking down on opposition leaders: The security agencies have been persistently arresting and beating opposition leaders, such as Bobi Wine and former Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) presidential candidate Kizza Besigye, who have frequently disrupted their campaigns and thwarted their movements.

Thwarting the opposition in their activities: the Electoral Commission has occasionally blocked the opposition in their activities on ambiguous interpretations of the law which have been adopted by the police to disperse opposition groups. Nonetheless, comparable meetings of the ruling party have been permitted to take place which is indicative of a selective application of rules.

Assaulting of journalists: The security forces have a history of assaulting, harassing, and intimidating journalists who are covering opposition campaigns. In February 2021, at least 20 journalists, covering an NUP petition at the UN human rights office, were beaten by military police. Equipment was destroyed and a number of journalists were admitted in hospitals.

Limitation of the freedom of speech and assembly.

The government employs legal and technological tools to curtail expression and assembly, especially during an election period.

Internet and social media shutdowns: Ahead of the 2021 election, the government shut down the internet and restricted access to social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This greatly affected the capacity of the opposition to campaign and organize.

Laws driven by political reasons: There are laws that have been used to suppress free speech such as the Computer Misuse Act. An example of this is in 2022, a satirical writer was arrested and tortured due to tweets that criticized the president. Although certain troubling provisions of the law were subsequently declared unconstitutional, the chilling effect on expression persists.

Suppressing civil society: The government has used heavy-handed bureaucratic interference to suspend civil society organizations (CSOs), including legal aid groups and others critical of the regime. This hinders the capacity of the independent bodies to observe and report on human rights abuses.

The particular instances of abuse, especially the November 2020 murders, forced disappearance, and targeted torture of NUP supporters are a clear pattern of systemic violations during election campaigns. The lack of willingness of the government to bring perpetrators to justice has created an atmosphere of impunity that has perpetuated abuse in subsequent election cycles.

2.4 Impunity

Examine the reasons why impunity is perpetuated by the perpetrators of human rights abuses in Uganda during electoral campaigns, including systemic problems within the law enforcement system, the judiciary, and government institutions.

The impunity of human rights violations during the electoral process in Uganda is deeply entrenched in systemic problems across law enforcement, judicial system, and the political environment in general. The perpetrators, mostly of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) and its allied security agencies, often get away with it due to institutional weaknesses, executive interference, and lack of true political will to enforce the rule of law.

Systemic problems in policing.

The Uganda Police Force (UPF) and other security agencies are major drivers of impunity due to a lack of proper oversight and their politicization.

Politicization of the security forces: Law enforcement agencies, including the police and military (UPDF) are viewed as tools to sustain the power of the ruling party instead of being viewed as independent bodies that enforce the law. Police usually assist in attacks on opposition groups during elections by blocking their rallies and permitting similar rallies by the NRM.

Lapsed internal accountability: Although there are periodic administrative or internal disciplinary actions against the officers, the disciplinary actions are often not enforced or are disproportionately mild, particularly when it comes to high-profile cases. In one case, police officers who were found guilty in a police court were simply redeployed to new jobs, which undermined the credibility of internal control.

Ineffective investigations: The police have a record of not carrying out credible and transparent investigations into human rights abuses during campaigns. As an example, the official police investigation into the murder of dozens of protesters in November 2020 was never published, and no one has been held responsible.

Violation of court orders: Security agencies have a history of not following court orders, especially those involving the release of political detainees on bail, which further reflects a lack of respect towards legal procedures and the judiciary.

Weaknesses in the judiciary

Although the Constitution of Uganda offers a sound legal framework, the judiciary is compromised by executive interference, corruption and systemic inefficiency.

Interference and lack of respect towards judicial independence: President Yoweri Museveni and other executive officials have openly interfered with the judiciary, with Museveni once saying the judiciary could not be independent of the Ugandan people. Judicial officers have been intimidated by security agents to ensure that they do not grant bail to political detainees.

Judicial corruption: It has been reported that judicial corruption is rampant, especially in lower courts, where judges are known to solicit and accept bribes. This also destroys the confidence of the people and makes the victims of justice seekers.

Weaponization of military courts: In politically sensitive cases, suspects, including civilians, are charged in military courts, which are less independent and allow for indefinite detention. This is a strategy of detaining opposition activists without a trial in civilian courts.

Failure to comply with judicial remedies: The government tends to delay or even refuse to comply with judicial remedies even when courts or the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) order compensation to the victim of the abuse.

Government institutions enabling impunity

The ruling government uses and controls the state institutions to establish a facilitating environment to impunity during elections.

Media and communication control: Media and communication control is exercised through the state owned media and the Uganda communications commission which is used to control the flow of information, censor critical reporting and silence opposition voices. This restricts the exposure of the abuses to the general public and avoids accountability.

Restrictive legislation: Laws such as the Public Order Management Act (POMA) and the now-repealed but still-influential Computer Misuse Act have been used to justify restrictions on free speech and assembly. Although certain provisions have been criticized, they have traditionally been employed to justify mass arrests and the suppression of dissent.

Delegation of violence: The state has sometimes delegated violence to non-state actors or vigilantes, which has allowed the state to distance itself in terms of direct responsibility of abuses. This strategy complicates the ability to follow the accountability to a centralized authority.

Lack of accountability over past atrocities: The long-standing history of not holding anybody accountable over past atrocities, such as the 2016 Kasese massacre, sends a clear message that the security forces can act with impunity. In 2016, a military action that killed approximately 150 people was found by the UN to involve murder and disproportionate use of force, but no one has been subjected to domestic accountability.

This culture of impunity has emboldened security forces and political actors to perpetrate human rights violations during campaigns knowing that they are unlikely to face any consequences.

2.5 Role of International Bodies

Critically assess the effectiveness of responses from international organizations (e.g., UN, AU, NGOs) to these abuses, including the adequacy of monitoring, reporting, and subsequent actions taken to hold violators accountable

The effectiveness of international bodies in responding to human rights abuses in Uganda during political campaigns has been limited, largely due to the Ugandan government's resistance and strategic manipulation of international processes. While international organizations, including the UN, AU, and NGOs, have provided crucial monitoring and reporting, their subsequent actions have often failed to produce meaningful accountability for perpetrators.

United Nations (UN)

The role of the UN has been largely centered on monitoring, reporting and issuing condemnations using its human rights mechanisms.

Monitoring and Reporting: UN human rights experts have continually issued press statements and reports on severe rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture and the use of lethal force by security forces. In the wake of the killings in November 2020, the UN human rights office reported the worsening human rights situation and called on the government to hold those responsible to account.

Universal Periodic Review (UPR): The UPR process is a review of the human rights situation in Uganda by the UN Human Rights Council. Although Uganda has officially accepted most of the recommendations, the implementation is usually ineffective. As an example, even after taking the advice to stop torture, there have been credible reports of torture.

Challenges: The failure of the Ugandan government to consistently act on its recommendations undermines the effectiveness of the UN. The government tends to disregard the recommendations of international organizations, as the report on the November 2020 killings was shelved. The diplomatic strategy of the UN is not always sufficient to break the strategy of the government to ignore the international pressure.

African Union (AU)

The response of the AU has been criticized as not being as forceful as the Western bodies, and as often being more concerned with regional stability than with holding member states accountable to abuses.

Election Observation Missions: The AU has deployed election observation missions, including one for the 2016 general election, which noted shortcomings despite characterizing the process as "largely peaceful". Nevertheless, such missions frequently do not have the mandate or political goodwill to effectively deal with systemic abuses.

Minimal Effect on Accountability: The focus of the AU on technical assistance and positive engagement has had little effect in compelling the government to bring perpetrators to justice. The AU has failed to adequately question the actions of Uganda to suppress the opposition through the use of state institutions.

Local and International NGOs.

NGOs have been playing a very crucial role in filling the gaps in monitoring and reporting that are left by intergovernmental organizations, but they are always threatened and restricted by the state.

Crucial Documentation

Such organizations as Human Rights Watch and local groups have carefully documented abuses, which is an invaluable source of evidence to the national and international audience. This documentation often forms the basis for reports by the UN and donor countries.

Targeted Repression

The government is very active in repressing the NGOs especially those that are engaged in advocacy and monitoring of human rights. The decision to suspend more than 50 NGOs in 2021 on the basis of such charges as supporting the opposition, was a clear step towards silencing critical voices. This highly restricts their freedom to act and hold them accountable.

Donor Dependence

Most of the local NGOs rely on foreign funding and this is the reason why they are vulnerable to pressure and accusations by the government that they are serving foreign interests.

Donor Nations (EU and US)

The donor countries, especially the EU and the US have exercised a certain degree of leverage through specific sanctions and conditional assistance, but their influence is often limited.

Targeted Sanctions: The US has imposed targeted sanctions, such as visa restrictions, on Ugandan officials implicated in abuses and corruption. In 2023, the US announced that it would remove Uganda under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) due to human rights violations.

Conditional Aid and World Bank Halt: In 2023, the World Bank suspended all new loans to Uganda and Western donors have sometimes redirected aid away from the government to local CSOs. This pressure has had some fruits but the government tends to stand up.

Disadvantages of Sanctions: Targeted sanctions have been criticized as potentially harmful to ordinary citizens and as failing to change the behavior of the regime. They are often disregarded by the government as unnecessary interference in its internal matters.

Overall assessment

The reaction of the international community to the human rights abuses in Uganda has been a combination of reporting, diplomatic pressure and targeted sanctions. Nevertheless, it is mostly considered to be insufficient in enforcing true accountability of various reasons including;

Governmental Defiance

The government of Uganda is very resistant to the outside pressure and it is very strategic in managing its image and at the same time carrying out repressive measures.

Limited Leverage

The regime of Museveni, which is usually viewed as a reliable military partner by certain Western countries, has traditionally been subjected to a muted criticism, which reduces the effect of the international pressure.

Internal Focus

Monitoring and reporting, though important, have not been accompanied by enough external pressure to compel internal systemic change, rendering domestic accountability mechanisms ineffective.

2.6 Case Studies

Include some case studies of political campaigns in Uganda, and the reaction (or lack of reaction) of international organizations to specific acts of violence or repression.

Case studies of violence and repression in Ugandan political campaigns and international response

The 2021 Ugandan general election is a stark case study of violence and human rights abuses committed during a political campaign, and followed by a diverse international response.

1. November 2020 protests and crackdown

Incident: The arrest of presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine) in November 2020 on allegations of violating COVID-19 regulations led to protests throughout Uganda. The security forces retaliated with lethal force, killing at least 54 people and injuring and arresting hundreds more.

International Response: EU and the US showed great concern regarding the violence and demanded that human rights should be safeguarded. The EU and the US cancelled their election observer missions respectively because of the absence of electoral reforms and refusal of accreditations respectively. Later the US introduced visa restrictions on individuals who were considered to have compromised the democratic process. Human Rights Watch reported the atrocities and called on the observance of freedoms of expression and assembly.

Abductions, detentions, and torture of opposition supporters (leading up to and following the 2021 elections)

Incident: During the time around the 2021 elections, it was reported that many opponents were abducted, imprisoned in unauthorized locations, and tortured by security agencies. Techniques involved harsh beatings and other types of abuse. The government admitted that it was holding 177 individuals in military detention and the Uganda Human Rights Commission documented 69 allegations of forced disappearance of individuals during elections.

International Response: The US pointed out these abuses in its human rights report and subsequently imposed sanctions and travel bans on the implicated Ugandan security officials. The Human Rights Watch released extensive reports about illegal detentions and violations, demanding responsibility. The UN High Commissioner of Human Rights also expressed his concerns.

Targeting of journalists

Incident: Journalists who reported on political activities, especially opposition rallies, were subjected to violence, harassment, and censorship. Examples of such incidents include a journalist being shot with a rubber bullet in November 2020 and military police beating journalists in February 2021. The Inspector General of Police also gave a warning to journalists who were covering protests.

International Response: The EU referred to the freedom of expression and the US cited violence against journalists as a reason to implement visa restrictions. Human Rights Watch reported these cases and demanded protection and cessation of harassment of journalists. An abuses petition was submitted to the UN Human Rights Office.

4. Social media restrictions and internet shutdown.

Incident: Days before the 2021 elections, the government blocked social media and then shut down the internet in the country over a period of five days. Later, partial access to social media (except Facebook) was restored. The government also imposed taxes on internet data, further limiting access.

International Response: The EU and the US condemned the restrictions on online communication as a challenge to the democratic processes and demanded that the freedom of expression be respected. Human Rights Watch reported the online crackdown, which included arrests of those who criticized the government.

General evaluation of foreign reaction.

International organizations such as the EU and the US have always criticized the issue of human rights violations in Ugandan political campaigns. Sanctions and visa restrictions are some of the measures that have been put in place. Nevertheless, as abuses persist, even in the lead-up to the 2026 elections, the overall effect of these international responses on the actions and responsibility of the Ugandan government remains controversial.

2.7 Civil Society and Grassroots Movements.

Emphasize how Ugandan civil society organizations and grassroots movements have been able to advocate their human rights and the challenges they face in getting international support.

The civil society organizations (CSOs) and grassroots movements in Uganda are very important in the advocacy of human rights and democracy, particularly during political campaigns. They however work in a hostile environment where they are repressed by the government, donor support is dwindling, and there are legal obstacles. All these complicate their ability to attract a steady stream of international support.

Contribution of the Ugandan civil society and grassroots movements.

Human rights monitoring and advocacy: Organizations like the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), Defend Defenders, and Chapter Four Uganda monitor and document human rights abuses, including violations of freedom of assembly and expression during election periods. They rely on this documentation to advocate nationally and internationally to hold them accountable.

Civic education and voter awareness: CSOs play an active role in civic education, informing the citizens about their rights and the electoral process, which is particularly important in an environment where the freedom of the media is limited. Through empowerment of citizens, they contribute towards open and accountable governance.

Legal aid and strategic litigation: Human rights organizations offer legal assistance to victims of state oppression and take part in strategic litigation to challenge restrictive laws and unlawful government actions.

Empowering marginalized communities: Grassroots movements and CSOs tend to focus on empowering marginalized communities, including women, youth, and the LGBTQI+ community, to engage in political processes and protect their rights.

Service delivery: CSOs supplement government service delivery by providing the most important services, especially in health, education, and humanitarian services. Although this may be winning government favor, it may also be a distraction to more contentious political advocacy.

Difficulties in attracting support on the international level.

Crackdown on civic space and oppressive legislation: The Ugandan government has been active in restricting the operating space of the CSOs through oppressive laws and intimidation. This encompasses the 2016 NGO Act that amplifies surveillance and introduces obstacles to registration and funding. This repression is further evidenced by the government suspending 54 CSOs, including election monitors, in August 2021. These activities have a chilling effect and make it more difficult to collaborate with international partners.

Allegations of political bias and foreign influence: The government has often accused CSOs and human rights defenders of being politically biased and fronts of foreign interests. This story is employed to discredit them and support a ban on their funding and activities. A good example of this tactic was the suspension of the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) in 2021.

Reliance on foreign funding and donor fatigue: The majority of Ugandan CSOs are highly dependent on foreign funding, which makes them vulnerable. The international donor support has also been uneven and has been accused of being pegged to the donor-driven priorities and not the local needs. International donors have also been experiencing signs of donor fatigue, whereby funds are channeled to other world priorities.

International partners have resorted to a de-risking strategy: Some international partners have either cut direct funding or shut down operations in Uganda, in response to the repressive environment. This has a devastating effect on the financial stability and functioning ability of local organizations. The suggested rules to screen the NGO funding and channel it through a government-controlled fund will probably hasten this process.

Information asymmetry and narrative control: The government control of state media and its aggressive PR campaigns can distort the reality about human rights violations. This complicates the ability of international actors to obtain a clear picture of the situation on the ground, which may hamper its response.

Complexity of the political realities in Uganda: The international actors are usually guided by the narratives and assumptions about the political situation in Uganda that are not aligned with the complex realities on the ground. This may result in a lack of connection between global intentions and domestic needs and strategies.

2.8 Comparative Analysis.

Compare the situation in Uganda with other countries that have had to face similar challenges during electoral campaigns and evaluate what can be learnt to respond internationally.

The history of electoral violence is common to Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia; however, the dynamics and responses of the states vary. The normalization of electoral violence, especially against the opposition and the civil society, is not a new phenomenon in Uganda. The military and other security forces have been extensively deployed to intimidate and suppress dissent as seen by the deadly crackdowns during the 2020 protests and the widespread reports of abductions and torture around the 2021 elections. Severe state-sponsored violence during elections has also occurred in Ethiopia, which is usually related to ethnic tensions and regional conflicts, most notably during the recent conflict in the Tigray region. Conversely, although Kenya has a history of brutal post-election violence, especially in 2008 and 2017, it also has stronger judicial and civil society institutions which have, at times, provided checks on executive power. In all three countries, women in politics experience a lot of violence, although the nature and reaction are different, with Kenya experiencing physical violence and Uganda misogynistic online violence.

The response of the international community and its weaknesses.

The international community has continuously criticized electoral misconducts and human rights violations in all three countries but with different levels of influence. International reaction has in Uganda taken the form of visa bans and recall of observer missions. However, the Museveni government's strategic use of regional security roles has often muted international pressure, with the government often dismissing such criticism as foreign interference. The humanitarian crisis and the wider conflict have complicated the international response to election challenges in Ethiopia, shifting the focus towards aid and peacebuilding in addition to electoral concerns. The stronger, although still challenged, civic space and judicial system in Kenya have offered more avenues to external engagement and pressure, with international condemnation sometimes having a more tangible impact due to domestic accountability mechanisms.

Lessons for international responses

Go beyond symbolic actions: Although sanctions and condemnations are indicative of disapproval, they have had little impact on the Museveni government which has often dismissed them as foreign intervention. The international actors are urged to coordinate their efforts to create a single front and take more focused and effective steps.

Focus on a long-term, unified approach: The international community tends to lose interest in the situation after an election, and domestic actors are vulnerable. It is more effective with a long-term and consistent approach that develops domestic capacity to be accountable and supports the judicial system, human rights institutions, and media.

Invest in domestic election observation: Expensive international election monitoring missions can be substituted with providing support and enhancing domestic election observer capacity. This creates local ownership, greater sustainability, and may be more resilient to government restrictions.

Strengthen local mechanisms of accountability: Countries like Kenya show the importance of strong national institutions, particularly an independent judiciary, in holding leaders accountable for election-related abuses. The international assistance must aim at empowering such institutions so that they can resist political influence.

Use new technologies in a responsible manner: As the example of internet shutdowns in Uganda has shown, technology can be a two-sided sword. The balance between international support of electoral transparency through technology, including vote-tally audits, and the need to protect digital rights and counter surveillance and disinformation should be balanced.

Encourage democratic reform, not merely elections: By concentrating on holding elections, one often overlooks the systemic problems that allow incumbent parties to stay in power through violence and corruption. It requires a more holistic approach to promote institutional reform, strengthen political parties, and make sure that the party and the state are separated.

2.9 Strategies

On the basis of comparative analysis and the difficulties that the Ugandan civil society has to deal with in the course of political campaigns, the following are some of the strategies that the international bodies need to consider to enhance their response to human rights violations during political campaigns:

Movement of reactive condemnation to proactive prevention.

International bodies should not be concerned with the prevention of abuses but rather with the condemnation of abuses once they have happened. This entails a long-term engagement plan that empowers domestic institutions and civil space between election periods.

Bring about long-term governance assistance: The international organizations can reallocate their funds to support long-term democratic reforms. This involves enhancing the autonomy of the judiciary, promoting parliamentary oversight committees, and reforming restrictive laws such as the NGO Act.

Invest in domestic observation: Invest heavily in the ability of credible domestic election monitoring organizations, instead of depending on expensive international observers. This encourages local ownership and offers a more robust source of autonomous information.

Enhance media freedom and digital rights: Offer technical support and financing to independent media outlets and journalists, especially those in Kampala. Vocally oppose internet blocking and advocate global legal and technical standards to avert digital repression.

Embrace a unified and uniform strategy towards sanctions.

Lack of coordination and consistency among international actors is often a hindrance to the effectiveness of sanctions.

Expand targeted sanctions: Implement targeted sanctions, such as travel bans and asset freezes, not only on senior government and military officials but also on individuals and entities responsible for corruption and human rights abuses. This complicates the ability of the officials to act with impunity.

Tap into regional influence: Use regional institutions such as the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to create a single voice on democratic norms. This will offset the capacity of the Ugandan government to employ its regional security position to evade international pressure.

Take into account financial implications: Collaborate with global financial bodies to emphasize the economic losses of corruption and political instability. The government and its economic allies can be pressured by publicizing data on the impacts of abuses and crackdowns on GDP, investment, and trade.

Enhance local accountability systems.

Long-term democratic change requires building domestic capacity to be accountable.

Fund transitional justice: Fund local efforts to establish truth commissions and reparations to victims of violence. This does not only give an account of justice but also creates a historical account that is counter to government accounts.

Fund strategic litigation: Fund and provide technical assistance to human rights lawyers and CSOs who undertake strategic litigation to challenge restrictive laws and unlawful acts by governments. The facilitation of access to justice by victims is an important aspect of ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

Increase reporting and documentation: Keep funding and supporting CSOs and human rights defenders in their work to document human rights violations. This enhances the evidence base of advocacy and accountability activities, especially to the international human rights mechanisms.

Move towards holistic, locally-led democratic reform

Instead of the so-called democracy-in-a-box approach that emphasizes individual events, adopt a larger approach that is guided by local voices.

Fund grassroots and community activities: More direct and flexible funding to grassroots movements and local CSOs, which are better placed to understand and respond to local dynamics. This creates strength against governmental crackdowns on formal civil society.

Encourage dialogue: Support programmes that encourage dialogue between all political actors, including opposition parties, civil society, and perhaps disaffected ruling party members. This may assist in de-escalating tensions and developing consensus on what reforms need to be implemented.

Curb abuse of security agencies: Back security sector reform that focuses on civilian control and professionalism. Training programs can be provided by international actors, however, these programs must be supported by serious demands of accountability and sanctions against any units or officials that engage in partisan violence.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter explains the research approach that will be used to meet the objectives of the research. It includes the research design, area of study, time scope, sources of data, data collection tools, population and sample, sampling technique, and data analysis methods. Also, it touches on the ethical considerations that are applicable to carrying out this research in the context of investigating sensitive issues of human rights abuse and impunity in Kampala Uganda during electoral campaigns.

3.1 Research Design

The research will assume qualitative research design. This design is suitable since it enables an in-depth analysis of the reaction of international bodies to human rights issues, which arise during electoral periods. Qualitative approaches help the investigator to study experiences, perceptions, and institutional responses in depths.

3.2 Area of Study

The research will be carried out in Kampala City, with a selection of urban areas where common political activities in the city are carried out by the people. Kampala was selected as it is the political and administrative hub of Uganda and has had a history of election related conflicts.

3.3 Study Population

The population of the study will consist of human rights practitioners, legal professionals, journalists, and community members who are aware of the human rights issues that are related to the elections.

3.3.1 Sample Size

About five (5) main informants will be chosen to undergo in-depth interviews. The given sample size is deemed to be sufficient to conduct a qualitative analysis, which will enable a detailed analysis of responses and experiences.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The respondents will be selected through purposive sampling, who have relevant knowledge and experience in regard to human rights monitoring and international engagement during electoral periods.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

In this research, the researcher will use qualitative research mechanisms to get detailed information about the reaction of international bodies to the violation of human rights and impunity during electoral campaigns in Kampala, Uganda. The reason why qualitative data analysis is appropriate is that it will allow the researcher to delve into experiences, institutional views and policy responses in detail. Key informant interviews will be the main method of data collection. Moreover, documentary review will be one of the significant research mechanisms used in the study. The study will also use case study analysis to analyze particular electoral events that are typified by human rights issues.

3.5.1 Interviews

The semi-structured interviews will be adopted to provide a flexibility level but ensuring that the main issues of interest as far as the study objectives are concerned are addressed. These will be interviews with purposely chosen respondents who have a specialized knowledge on human rights and electoral governance. The respondents will involve the officials of human rights organizations, civil society actors, legal practitioners, journalists, and election observers. These interactions will enable the researcher to gain expertise, professional experiences, as well as informed opinions that will be relevant to the study objectives.

3.5.2 Documentary Review

The relevant reports, policy documents, academic journals, and publications by international and regional organizations will be reviewed to complement primary data. This will entail the systematic review of secondary sources like reports by international organizations like the United Nations, African Union and European Union and publications of organizations like the Human Rights Watch and the Amnesty International. It will also review government reports, publications by the Uganda Human Rights Commission, reports of election observation, academic journals, policy papers, and credible media sources. Documentary analysis will allow the researcher to collect historical facts, institutional standpoints and documented evidence of electoral human rights abuses and the international reactions to them.

3.5.3 Case study analysis

Cases will be selected to interpret the trends of violations and how international responses were. Such a mechanism will offer contextual and practical examples that will contribute to the study findings.

3.6 Data Analysis.

The thematic analysis will be applied to analyze data. The responses will be grouped into themes in accordance to the study objectives to help in identifying patterns and arising issues.

3.7 Procedure of data collection

Data collection process will be conducted in systematic order that will guarantee reliability and adherence to ethics. Preparation of research instruments will be the first step. The researcher will prepare semi-structured interview guides that will consist of open-ended questions that will be in line with the research objectives and questions. Checklists (document review checklists) will also be ready to assist in extracting the relevant information about the secondary sources.

The second step will entail obtaining permission to carry out the study. A letter of introduction will be obtained with the university and presented to the relevant institutions and potential respondents to seek their permission to gather data. This will be used to access the participants and organizational records.

The third step will entail identification and selection of respondents through purposive sampling. The sample will be chosen among participants with the appropriate knowledge and experience in the areas of human rights monitoring, electoral processes, and the international engagement. Once identified, the researcher will make appointments with respondents in convenient times and places.

The fourth step will entail carrying out the interviews. The interviews will be conducted in the form of a face-to-face meeting or virtual space where access is restricted. Responses will be documented by taking notes and recording the audio to be accurate. Probing techniques will be used to get more elaborate explanations and clarifications where required.

The fifth step will entail documents collection and review. Libraries, organizational offices and online databases will be used to obtain relevant reports, legal frameworks, institutional publications, and academic literature. These reports will be scrutinized keenly to get information that will be relevant to the study theme.

Lastly, all the data obtained will be stored, categorized and kept safely in both physical and electronic forms. Confidentiality will be highly upheld. The researcher will also cross-check the data by interview responses, documentary evidence to validate and ensure reliability by triangulating.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study will be conducted according to the ethical standards. Participants will give informed consent, ensure confidentiality, and participation will be voluntary.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces, and critically evaluates the findings of the research on the role of the international bodies in response to violations of human rights and impunity during electoral campaigns in Kampala. It is analyzed through the use of qualitative information gathered by key informant interviews and review of a documentary as presented in Chapter Three. The results are grouped thematically according to the objectives of the study and are discussed in the context of the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. This method allows a full comprehension of the empirical facts on the ground and the theoretical and scholarly discussions surrounding the issue of human rights governance and international intervention.

4.1 Nature of Human Rights Violation in the course of Electoral campaigns.

The results of this research indicate that electoral campaigns in Kampala are always marked by rampant and systematic human rights abuses especially against opposition supporters, journalists and civil society actors. Respondents stressed that such violations are not occasional or accidental but a certain pattern connected with the increased political rivalry. One respondent (A) elaborated that, during elections, security agencies use excessive force, arrests and intimidation become almost a norm, particularly in opposition strongholds. Another respondent (N) supported this perception by adding

“That the violations are organized and that they tend to increase with the opposition mobilization.”

These testimonies are quite similar to the findings in the current literature, specifically, Kumar (2019) and Amnesty International (2021), who report on the systematic application of force and repression of civil liberties during electoral periods in Uganda. The overlapping of field information with literature indicates that electoral violence in Kampala is internalized within wider governance frameworks that uphold regime stability over the safeguarding of fundamental rights. Moreover, the targeting of journalists, as also indicated by respondent M, who stated that in elections,

“Journalists are treated as enemies, underscores the intentional limitation of information flows and public accountability.”

This is in line with the results of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (2020) which identifies the media repression as one of the main characteristics of the election-related abuses.

Analytically, these results suggest that the human rights abuse in the electoral campaigns is institutionalized practices and not an isolated incidence. They are also mechanisms of political control, which supports the argument that Uganda electoral environment is operating within a hybrid system that combines democratic processes with coercive state practices.

4.2 Patterns and Forms of Abuse

The study also ascertains that the human rights abuses that occur during electoral campaigns come in various, interconnected forms, such as arbitrary arrests, excessive use of force, repression of freedoms of assembly and expression, and systematic intimidation of opposition actors. The selective application of the law was consistently mentioned by the respondents as a major contributor to such abuses. As an example, respondent K noted that,

“In many instances, people are arrested without clear charges and kept in custody beyond legal boundaries especially when they are affiliated to the opposition. Likewise, respondent L highlighted that, laws that control the public order, are selectively applied to block anti-government rallies but not anti-government parties.”

These conclusions are highly reminiscent of Ndala (2021) and Lwanga (2022) who state that legal frameworks in Uganda are often manipulated to justify repression. The evidence indicates that there is a dual reality whereby laws are formally available but are applied in a highly politicized way. Such selective application negatively affects the rule of law and reduces the level of trust of the population in the state institutions.

Analytically, the continuation of such patterns is indicative of a greater structural problem in the governance system. As a means of political regulation, the utilization of legal instruments as the mechanisms of the immediate repression as well as as the tools of the establishment of the long-term patterns of the abuse. It establishes a situation in which opposition actors are under a consistent threat, which suppresses the real competition among the parties and undermines the process of democratic consolidation.

4.3 International Bodies Responses.

The results show that international organizations, such as the United Nations, African Union, and other international non-governmental organizations, have an apparent but insignificant role in responding to human rights violations during the electoral campaigns. Their actions are mostly limited to surveillance, reporting and making diplomatic statements with some occasional sanctions. Respondent T added that

“The pressure used is often inadequate to force any meaningful accountability and respondent R noted that the pressure applied is often insufficient to compel any meaningful accountability.”

These attitudes are in line with Smith (2020) and Adeyemi (2021), who criticize the highly symbolic character of international responses. The results can also be interpreted in terms of the impact of realist considerations, as explained by Waltz (1979), where state sovereignty and strategic interests determine international involvement. This was well expressed by respondent B who said that

“due to the role played by Uganda in the security of the region, international players are careful when using strong measures.”

The analysis implies that the role of international bodies in norm-setting and international awareness is limited, but their ability to enforce compliance is also limited. Their effectiveness is greatly undermined by structural constraints like the absence of enforcement mechanisms and the need to rely on state cooperation. As a result, the international reactions do not easily translate into the practical changes in the human rights situation on the ground.

4.4 Persistence of Impunity

One of the main conclusions of this research is that impunity among those who commit human rights violations during elections is deep-rooted. There has always been a stress on the fact that accountability mechanisms are weak or purposely weakened. Respondent A said

“That security officers operate with the assurance that they will not face punishment, whereas respondent M noted that most of the reported cases are not properly investigated or concluded.”

The findings are consistent with those of Byesigye (2020) and Besseling (2019), who emphasize the importance of institutional protection and political interference in perpetuating impunity. Respondent K also pointed out

“That judicial processes are usually affected by political factors, which restrain their autonomy. This is a wider issue of judicial interference in the executive as has been addressed in the literature.”

Analytically, the continued existence of impunity can be interpreted as a cause and an effect of a poor governance system. Not only does it allow further violations but also sends a signal to the perpetrators that they are allowed to continue violating. This forms a vicious cycle whereby abuses are perpetuated across electoral cycles and this compromises the protection of human rights and the legitimacy of democracy.

4.5 The role of the Civil Society Organizations.

The research concludes that civil society organizations are critical in reporting human rights abuses, offering legal assistance to the victims and pushing the accountable. Their efficacy, however, is seriously limited by a limiting operating environment. Respondent L pointed out that due to fear and governmental regulation, they are always under pressure and may be closed down in case they are seen to be too critical, whereas respondent T noted

“That they are always under pressure and may be shut down in case they are perceived to be too critical”.

These findings are in line with Taylor (2022), who describes civil society in Uganda as acting within the framework of repression and resilience. Irrespective of the challenges, the civil society actors continue to play a crucial role in human rights monitoring and advocacy, often taking the place of the state and international institutions.

Analytically, the limited participation of civil society is a symptom of larger tensions between state control and civic participation. Although these bodies are critical in ensuring accountability, they have limited capacity that minimizes the effectiveness of the human rights protection framework as a whole. Enhancement of civil society space is thus imperative in enhancing the national and international response towards the violation of human rights.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

1. Systematic Character of Violations of Human Rights.

The findings of the study show that human rights violations in the electoral campaigns in Kampala are not in isolated cases, but rather systematic and predictable incidences entrenched within the political landscape. Patterns of excessive force, arbitrary arrests and suppression of opposition activities, especially during peak campaign periods, were consistently described by respondents. This proves the point that is made in the literature by Kumar (2019) and Amnesty International (2021), which describes electoral violence in Uganda as being organized and state-driven. The fact that similar violations occur in the course of the electoral cycles is indicative of the fact that there are existing institutional practices that are entrenched in nature and that focus more on political control than on the protection of fundamental rights. Such systematic character of abuse makes the electoral procedures less credible and weakens the process of democratic consolidation.

2. Politicization and Biased use of Legal Frameworks.

The other important finding is the selective application of law especially those that govern public order and security. Respondents pointed out that legal instruments are frequently employed to curtail opposition activities and to allow ruling party activities to continue without any interference. This substantiates the claim made by Ndala (2021) that laws in Uganda are often manipulated to justify repression. The results indicate that political interference undermines the rule of law, and this leads to a dual system, in which the law is formally declared, but it is applied selectively in practice. This politicization does not only contribute to human rights violations, but it also reduces the trust that people have towards the state institutions, further entrenching the governance challenges.

3. Low Success of International Responses.

The paper shows that despite the active monitoring and reporting on human rights abuses by the international bodies, their action is still largely ineffective in holding the perpetrators accountable. Respondents reported that most interventions are confined to statements, reports and occasional sanctions, which have little effect on state behavior. This is in line with Smith (2020) and Adeyemi (2021) who state that international responses are usually symbolic and limited by diplomatic factors. Theoretically, this is a manifestation of realist assumptions (Waltz, 1979), where the sovereignty of states and the interests of states assume priority over the enforcement of human rights. Consequently, the international engagement, as apparent, is not as enforced as it should be in order to induce any significant change.

4. Impunity in State Institution.

One of the key problems that the findings indicate is the continued impunity of the perpetrators of human rights abuses. Respondents highlighted that security personnel have the tendency to act without fear of punishment as investigations are never carried out or terminated. It can be connected to the arguments of Byesigye (2020) and Besseling (2019), who detect institutional protection and political interference as factors that drive impunity. The results show that the challenges in law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, combined with the power of the executive, provide an environment in which the accountability mechanisms are ineffective. This institutionalized impunity does not only contribute to the continuation of violations but also sends signals of tolerance to abuse, which contributes to the cycles of violence during elections.

5. Indeed Restricted yet Vital Position of Civil Society.

The paper brings out the significant but limited role of the civil society organizations in dealing with human rights abuses. Although these organizations actively record abuses, offer legal assistance and promote accountability, their activities are curtailed by restrictive legislation, government interference and political intimidation. This observation is in line with Taylor (2022) who explains the presence of civil society in Uganda as being in a context of both resilience and repression. Nevertheless, civil society continues to be a major player in the advancement of human rights and the bridging of gaps that have been left by state and international institutions. The little space within which they have to operate is however a major impediment to their overall effectiveness.

6. Difference between International Obligations and the Implementation at home.

The results indicate that there is a great mismatch between the international human rights engagements of Uganda as well as their actual practice at the domestic level. Despite the country being a signatory to a number of international and regional instruments on human rights, respondents reported that the country was not practicing what it was committing to, especially during electoral periods. This observation supports the argument by Mamdani (2014) on the complexities of the state governance of post-colonial states where formal compliance with international norms does not always translate into domestic compliance. This is further exacerbated by a weak institutional capacity, absence of political will and limited enforcement mechanisms by international bodies. This lack of connection is one of the key issues to consider in solving the problem of human rights violations and impunity in Uganda.

4.7 Conclusion

The chapter has presented and analysed the findings on the reaction of international bodies to human rights violation and impunity during electoral campaigns in Kampala. The analysis shows that although there are international attention and advocacy, the general effect on accountability is low. The continuity of violations and impunity underscores the need to engage in more effective and coordinated strategies that would address both international constraints and domestic institutional weaknesses.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main findings of the study, makes conclusions based on the analysis, and offers practical recommendations that would help to improve the reaction of international organizations to the violation of human rights and the lack of prosecution in the form of electoral campaigns in Kampala, Uganda. The recommendations are based on the empirical results as well as the literature that will be reviewed in the previous chapters.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The research has determined that electoral campaigns in Kampala are always typified by widespread violation of human rights, such as arbitrary arrests, excessive use of force, suppression of freedoms of expression and assembly and intimidation of opposition actors. These infractions were also observed to have a systematic pattern especially during high levels of political activity, and thus are not isolated incidents.

The results also found that legal frameworks tend to selectively apply the law with laws being used to curtail opposition activities and favoring the activities of the ruling party. This arbitrary application of the rule of law is a source of a more general atmosphere of political inequality.

In relation to the international responses, the study discovered that the international agencies such as the United Nations, African Union, and international NGOs are evident in their monitoring and reports of human rights violations. Yet, their actions are mostly confined to diplomatic utterances, reports and occasional sanctions, which can hardly be considered effective in terms of accountability or prevention of future violations.

The issue of impunity continued to be a major problem with the perpetrators, especially in security agencies, rarely being held accountable to their deeds. The weak institutional structures, political interference and absence of political will were cited as some of the factors that help keep this impunity going.

The paper has also observed the ultimate role of civil society organizations in reporting abuses, and in advocating human rights. Their performance is however constrained by government restrictions, lack of sufficient funding and political intimidation.

Overall, the study established that there was a significant disjuncture between the international human rights commitments undertaken by Uganda and their application in the country and more so during election periods.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that human rights abuses during electoral campaigns in Kampala is systemic and well entrenched in the political and institutional systems of the country. They are not merely a by-product of the electoral contest but are often used as a direct tool of political domination.

This analysis also concludes that although international institutions have a role to play in creating awareness and provision of normative standards, their reactions are largely ineffective in ensuring accountability due to structural constraints, respect of state sovereignty and competing geopolitical interests. As a result, their interventions have not been able to make any major changes to the trend of human rights abuses in Uganda.

Impunity is a symptom of inherent weaknesses in domestic institutions, especially law enforcement agencies and the judiciary, which is often politicized. This has been a cycle whereby violations are constantly reoffended without repercussions.

Also, the civil society organizations albeit playing a very crucial part in ensuring accountability as well as supporting the victims, their effectiveness is limited by a restrictive operating environment. They are not able to do much to change the situation unless it is more grounded and supported.

In a way, the paper concludes that a combination of a more robust domestic accountability system, and more effective and coherent international action is needed to tackle human rights violations within the context of electoral campaigns.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Government of Uganda Recommendations.

The government ought to enhance the autonomy and ability of the judiciary to see to it that cases of human rights violation are handled in an unbiased and effective manner. This entails making sure that no judicial officers are interfered with politically and that the decisions made by the judicial bodies are obeyed.

The operations of the security sector should also be reformed particularly during the elections periods. Security agencies will be trained and made to work within the confines of the human rights standards that are to have clear accountability mechanisms in case of misconduct.

The government needs to revisit and rewrite laws like those that govern order in the society so that they are not used to unfairly deny the basic freedoms. The legal frameworks should be applied on all the actors of the political arena as a way of ensuring that there is fairness and credibility in the electoral process.

5.3.2 Recommendations to International Bodies.

International organizations have been encouraged to abandon reactive strategies of condemnation, and use more proactive and sustained engagement strategies. It entails long-term monitoring and involvement before, during and even after the electoral terms.

More coordination of the international actors is needed to ensure that there is a common and consistent approach to the problem of human rights violations. The incoherent responses of the international pressure compromise the overall effectiveness of the international pressure.

The international bodies are also supposed to increase the application of targeted sanctions against those involved in human rights abuses but with minimal harm done to the general population. The measures must be supported with well defined accountability benchmarks.

5.3.3 Recommendations to the Civil Society Organizations.

The civil society groups are urged to enhance collaboration and coalitions to enhance their advocacy efforts and to be resilient to the government restrictions. One of the strategies is a frequent one that promotes awareness and strength.

There is also need to invest in digital tools and other innovative ways of documentation, to ensure that the evidence of human rights violations is preserved and is accessible, even in restrictive environments.

In addition, the actions of civil society actors should also intensify civic education activities in order to empower the citizens with information regarding their rights, and the importance of accountability in the democratic process.

5.3.4 Recommendations to Donor Agencies

The donor agencies have to make long term and flexible funds to civil society organizations, particularly those organizations which are engaged in human rights monitoring and advocacy. This will enhance their working ability and self-sufficiency.

They are also expected to assist in the form of empowering domestic institutions such as the judiciary and human rights commissions in an effort to boost accountability measures.

The long-term governance and institutional reforms should be given priority by the donors instead of concentrating on the short-term electoral interventions.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

The future studies should be able to explore how regional blocs such as the East African Community can be utilized in addressing the cases of human rights violations during elections. Research on the effects of digital repression, such as internet shutdowns, on the electoral process and voter turnout, is also needed.

Furthermore, the study of the future can be the experiences of the victims of the electoral violence in more detail, with a particularly keen interest in the access to justice and the long-term socio-economic outcomes.

5.5 Final Conclusion

This paper has indicated that the breach of human rights and impunity in the electoral campaigns in Kampala is still a thorn in the flesh despite the international attention and advocacy. As much as the international bodies may be of great assistance in creating these issues, it can hardly work without strong domestic accountability systems.

To address these issues, a multi-pronged strategy, that includes institutional reform, a more active civil society, and more effective strategies of international intervention, are needed. Only through such co-ordinated efforts can any significant progress be made in regards to protecting the human rights and improving democratic governance in Uganda.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a study titled “The Response of International Bodies to Human Rights Violations and Impunity in Kampala Uganda During Electoral Campaigns.” The purpose of this interview is to collect information for academic purposes only. Your responses will be treated with confidentiality and used strictly for research purposes.

Thank you for your participation.

Section A: Background Information

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Occupation/Profession
4. Organization/Institution
5. Role related to human rights, governance, or electoral processes

Section B: Interview Questions

Objective One: Human Rights Violations During Electoral Campaigns

1. What forms of human rights violations commonly occur during electoral campaigns in Kampala?
2. Which groups of people are most affected by these violations?
3. In your opinion, what are the major causes of these abuses during elections?
4. How do security agencies behave during electoral campaigns?
5. How do these violations affect democratic participation and public trust?

Objective Two: Responses of International Bodies

1. Which international bodies have been most active in responding to human rights violations in Uganda?
2. What actions have these organizations taken during electoral campaigns?
3. How effective have international responses been in addressing these violations?
4. What challenges limit the effectiveness of international organizations in Uganda?
5. How does Uganda's political environment influence international intervention?

Objective Three: Impunity and Accountability

1. Why do perpetrators of human rights abuses continue to act without accountability?
2. How effective are Uganda's legal and judicial systems in handling election-related abuses?
3. What role do political leaders play in either promoting or preventing accountability?
4. What impact does impunity have on victims and society?

Objective Four: Role of Civil Society

1. What role do civil society organizations play in protecting human rights during elections?
2. What challenges do these organizations face?
3. How can international bodies better support local civil society organizations?

Recommendations

1. What measures should the government take to reduce human rights violations during elections?
2. What should international bodies do differently to improve accountability?
3. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations?