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Uganda: No Woman Should Be Sexually Assaulted By Security Forces



## Barbara Allimadi; reports threats and intimidation

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By Barbara Allimadi

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### [Comment]

I am happy to see that the International Community including the United States, a major supporter of the Ugandan government, has denounced the sexual attack against [Ingrid](#) Turinawe by Uganda's security forces. In a statement the U.S. State Department said: "As we have stated on numerous occasions, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are fundamental human rights and a critical component of democracy."

Many of us in Uganda have always believed this; many have sacrificed their lives for this right. Ugandans were shocked and deeply embarrassed by the barbaric attack on Ingrid. The State Department also stated: "We condemn any excessive use of violence by police....We encourage Uganda to investigate allegations of excessive use of force by security services and to hold perpetrators accountable. We also continue to encourage Uganda to take tangible steps to improve its human rights record, particularly with regard to the protection of civil liberties and the human rights of women and of minority populations."

I am confident that we represented the [feelings](#) of millions of outraged women around the world who may have seen the images of the attack on Ingrid when we demonstrated in front of the police station last Monday. We wanted the police to know that we respect our bodies even if they did not and that we will stand up and protect our rights.

Uganda is involved in a democratic struggle, and I've chosen to participate peacefully, but most often our non-violence has been met with violence. We are encouraged by the messages of support that have come from all over the world especially through social media outlets.

In addition to fully participating in all the peaceful demonstrations that had been coordinated by A4C, I have been working with university students to empower them with job creating skills. I have experience running business from the time I spent abroad. For the last several weeks, I have been sharing some of those skills with students from Kyambogo and Makerere Universities and we have also discussed various ideas about job creation. As you know youth unemployment level in Uganda stands at an abysmal 83%.

At this time, I would like to be on record as having today expressed concern about my own personal safety and security and that of some of our university students.

In one of our meetings with students at Makerere University, two unidentified men approached our table and took our photographs without our permission. When we confronted one of them, he said that our meeting was "illegal."

Some of the students are also being intimidated by security operatives. They have reported receiving threatening calls and text messages. One of the students from Kyambogo, [John Mugabi] who had also received such messages, has not been seen in the last several days and after trying to contact him on his cell phone and checking his home, we are seriously concerned about his whereabouts. We pray that he has not come in harm's way.

We call upon the International Community to ensure that this government respects the universal right of freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression. We also call upon countries such as the USA and UK which helps sustain this government to hold it accountable for any acts of violence against civilians during demonstrations and to even suspend any foreign aid assistance that only emboldens government impunity.

No person's right to protest should be limited in a free country which is supposedly at peace. No woman should be targeted for standing up for her beliefs. No woman should be sexually assaulted by security forces whose salaries are paid by taxpayers' money for their protection and safety.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY