

26 April 2019

Uganda: Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa hospitalized after attack by police officers in Naguru

On 24 April 2019 human rights defender **Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa** was hospitalized as a result of a violent assault by a group of police officers at the main entrance to the Uganda Police Force headquarters in Naguru, Kampala District. The human rights defender, who is seven months pregnant, was attacked while she was trying to obtain permission to organize a peaceful protest against human rights violations committed by security forces.

[Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa](#) is an independent woman human rights defender. In recent years, she has defended civil and political rights in Uganda and demonstrated against the imprisonment of human rights defender and scholar Dr Stella Nyanzi, who has been detained for the last four months.

Over the past few weeks Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa has highlighted police brutality in Uganda. On 28 March 2019, a student at Kyambogo University lost his hand after he was hit by a tear gas canister during a student protest against a new tuition fee policy. Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa publicly condemned the police reaction to the peaceful protests, criticising the use of tear gas and other harmful chemicals to disperse the demonstrators. On 6 April 2019, the human rights defender posted a message on social media seeking signatures for a petition against police brutality.

In the morning of 24 April 2019, police officers at the Uganda Police Force headquarters in Naguru used pepper spray against Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa while she was waiting to be seen by the Inspector General of the Ugandan police. They forcibly removed her from her vehicle, stood and sat on her and dragged her along the ground until she lost consciousness. She was then left outside the Iran-Uganda Hospital in Naguru where she regained consciousness. She was eventually transferred to another hospital where it was discovered that the human rights defender, who is seven months pregnant, had internal bleeding and was suffering from abdominal pain.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the attack against Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa and believes that it is an effort to silence her. Front Line Defenders condemns the ongoing human rights violations by security forces and recognises them as part of an effort to clamp down on dissent, specifically against human rights defenders fighting for civil and political rights in Uganda.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Uganda to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack against Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Uganda are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw attention to Article 6 (b and c): “*Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (b) As provided for in human rights and other applicable international instruments, freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms; (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters*”, and to Article 12 (1 and 2): “*(1) Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (2) The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.*”

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson
Executive Director