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LIBERTY PROBONO INITIATIVE (LPI)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kampala, Uganda

LWERA WETLAND: FEMALE CLIMATE ACTIVISTS BRUTALLY ARRESTED FOR EXERCISING THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO DEFEND

On October 21, 2025, two female climate activists and several others were arrested while peacefully marching to the offices of the **National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA)** in Kampala. The group was delivering a petition calling on NEMA to revoke the permits issued to a Chinese company authorizing sand mining and commercial rice cultivation in Lwera wetland. These activities have caused severe environmental degradation in one of the Uganda key wetlands.

Among those arrested were Nampijja prossy(31) and Nakabuye Zaina (23). It should be noted that during and after the arrest, the activists were brutally beaten, sustaining visible injuries and severe pain.

"This incident is not an isolated one but rather part of a concerning pattern of police brutality against environmental and climate activists in Uganda. In previous instances, activists have been violently arrested beaten and remanded to Luzira prison as well. At the moment, some female activists were arrested on August 1,2025 and have spent over 90 days in detention without a fair trial reflecting a growing trend of intimidation aimed at silencing voices for calling for environmental justice". **Ms. Doreen Namara,CEO Liberty pro bono initiative(LPI)**

The activists were detained overnight at Central Police Station (CPS) Kampala and later presented before chief magistrate court at Buganda road where they were charged with public nuisance contrary to section 148(1) of the penal code Act Cap 128 and remanded to Luzira prison. The hearing of their case has been scheduled for November 4,2025.

In court the human rights lawyers representing the activists requested that the activists be medically examined due to the brutality they endured during and after the arrest. However, the trial magistrate deferred the ruling on whether they should receive medical examination until November 4, 2025 effectively leaving the activists in pain and without medical care for several weeks.

Lwera wetland, a lifeline under threat stretches along Kampala Masaka high way, spanning an area of approximately 1,000 hectares. It plays a critical role in regulating Uganda's climate, filtering pollutants and serving as a natural buffer against flooding. Wetlands act as carbon sinks absorbing greenhouse gases and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

However, widespread of mining and conversion of wetland area into commercial farms have destroyed large sections of Lwera, releasing stored carbon into the atmosphere and worsening the country's climate vulnerability. This destruction, environmentalists warn that it undermines Uganda's commitment under the **United Nations Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement**.

"We find it deeply concerning that citizens peacefully exercising their constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and expression are treated as criminals. It is unacceptable that individuals advocating for environmental protection, an act in public interest are subjected to violence, humiliation and denial of medical attention" **Eva Kakuuma, head of litigation LPI stated**

If it takes three weeks to decide whether injured climate activists should be examined, what condition will they be in by the time the decision is made? Many activists have suffered chronic complications as a result of brutality during arrests and this pattern of abuse must stop. **Ms. Eva added.**

We therefore:

- We demand the authorities at Luzira prison to ensure medical attention and examination for the detained activists
- We also demand the government to drop the charges arising from the peaceful protest and respect the constitutional rights of the activists.
- Further, we urge the Uganda police to end targeting and criminalization of peaceful protesters and environmental activists.

- Finally, we Insist that the Uganda Prisons Service ensures humane detention conditions, with attention to the gender-specific needs of women.

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