



NATIONAL UNION OF DISABLED PERSONS OF UGANDA

NUDIPU CALLS ON SECURITY AGENCIES TO RESPECT RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES DURING AND POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

There is no doubt that the World including Uganda continues to face a global health pandemic affecting people of all kinds with no distinctions. As the pandemic soars, hence threatening human life and existence, Persons with Disabilities have not been spared. Persons with Disabilities have been highly affected as a result of attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers reproduced in the COVID-19 response.

It is worth noting that many Persons with Disabilities have pre-existing health conditions that make them more susceptible to contracting the virus and hence leading to elevated levels of death. COVID-19 has revealed the extent to which people are marginalized, and has intensified the already existing inequalities among Persons with Disabilities including but not limited to poverty and higher rates of violence, neglect and abuse which should be collectively addressed.

This period exhibited ugly scenes of torture to Persons with Disabilities as a result of their unique status. Numerous cases of inhuman treatment of Persons with Disabilities across the country manifested after the President of Uganda on the 30th March, 2020 declared a nationwide lockdown. With the above pronouncement, curfew time starting from 7 pm to 6:30 am spanning over a period of 14



Ngirabakunzi Edson
Chief Executive Officer
(NUDIPU)

days first, but gradually got extended in a bid to curb the spread of COVID 19 Pandemic.

For instance, Oloya Willis, a deaf person and a resident of Mugila West Village, Adilang Sub-County in Agago District was on Friday 16th April 2020 confronted by security personnel enforcing curfew. He could not understand the mode of communication and was not given due attention. They resorted to firing live bullets on him and hence gravely injuring his leg, which was later amputated, leaving him with multiple disabilities - (Being deaf and now with a

physical disability). The amputation of Oloya's leg poses many questions on how he would fend for himself and the family in future given his current condition but only God knows.

In a related event, Mr. Opio Ronald, another deaf person was in August 2020, tortured by the security guard of Resident District Commissioner (RDC) for Kole District while in Lira District and died after few months in the hospital due to the effects of torture and high handedness of security personnel.

With these glaring examples, NUDIPU believes there are a number of dreadful acts committed on Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 era that have not come to light which negatively impacts on their lives and well being.

The shooting of civilians by security personnel particularly Persons with Disabilities contravenes the promotion and protection of their fundamental human rights and freedoms which the Government of Uganda is obliged to uphold. In spite of all these atrocities, no single statement has ever been made by responsible agencies of government in regards to Persons with Disabilities safety.

While emphasis was placed on the various mitigation measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 through the application and

implementation of the guidelines by the men in uniform, they were caught off guard on disability issues.

National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU) is concerned that Government of Uganda has not come out to respond on the security situation of Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 pandemic. We need to know; what steps the Government will take to redress the injustices committed to Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 pandemic? We demand that the suspects be reprimanded and prosecuted for violating the rights of Persons with Disabilities with closer look on the impact of torture and gun violence. It is important that the government puts mechanisms in place e.g. for easy identification and reporting of human rights violations against Persons with Disabilities. Besides, security agencies should take considerable steps in sensitizing security Personnel on how to handle Persons with Disability in view of their unique needs in consultation with NUDIPU. What accessible communication strategies have been used to reach out to Persons with Disabilities such as the deaf for example during this trying moment?

NUDIPU has continually urged relevant Government Ministries to sensitize security personnel on how to treat Persons with

Disabilities during execution of their duties without violating the rights of Persons with Disabilities. Government needs to protect and secure the lives of Persons with Disabilities.

NUDIPU commends His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for his timely intervention on issuing directives aimed at curtailing the pandemic and the achievements so far registered. NUDIPU as an Umbrella Organisation of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda joins the rest of stakeholders in the fight against COVID-19 and calls upon all Persons with Disabilities in Uganda to abide by the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to minimize the risks associated with COVID-19".

It's our prayer therefore that Government will continue to uphold the rights of Persons with Disabilities to respect and human dignity. NUDIPU is available to sensitize all security agencies in the country on disability management with appropriate measures to enable Persons with Disabilities realize their full mental and physical potential.

We further call on the security agencies to investigate all the alleged atrocities committed towards Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19 and institute special mitigation measures to protect the rights of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda.