



## PRESS RELEASE

### Announcement of the winner of the EU Human Rights Defenders' Award 2016

The annual European Union Human Rights Defenders Award is granted by the EU Member States, Norway and the EU Delegation in Uganda to recognise the achievements of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda.

The Heads of Missions of the EU Member States, the EU Delegation and Norway, are happy to announce Mr. Robert Sempala, as winner of the EU Human Rights Defenders' Award 2016.

Robert is the National Coordinator, Human Rights Network for Journalists Uganda. Under his leadership, his organisation has supported hundreds of journalists who have been assaulted, imprisoned, and targeted in the course of their work.

Human Rights Network for Journalists Uganda has ensured that violations against media freedom remain in the limelight. They were recently closely involved in documenting cases of media practitioners being assaulted by both politicians and security agencies during the election campaigns.

The 2016 edition of the award ceremony was hosted with the auspices of the Embassy of Denmark in Uganda. Speaking at the event, Mogens Pedersen, the Ambassador of Denmark to Uganda said:

“Freedom of expression is an important principle in any democracy. In Uganda, we have recently witnessed restrictions



*Robert Sempala (centre) the winner of the EU Human Rights Defenders' Award 2016 with Mogens Pedersen, the Ambassador of Denmark to Uganda and a colleague.*

on the media – including shutting down the social media, which has continued even after the elections. Some media houses have been intimidated and several journalists were assaulted, or injured during the course of their work. We call for tolerance of divergent political views and a constructive national dialogue “.

#### Background

Human Rights Defenders are individuals that promote and protect universally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms. These include civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. The work of Human Rights Defenders has a positive impact on a country's development and is essential for encouraging the respect for human rights as recognised by international human rights standards and agreements. Human Rights Defenders need to be protected from interference and reprisals while executing their work. In addition, their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly need to be safeguarded to enable them to defend others.

An individual eligible for the EU Human Rights Defenders' Award is nominated by another individual or organization. Human Rights organizations active in Uganda were invited to nominate candidates for the award. Candidates were assessed by a jury composed of human rights experts of different European Embassies and the EU Heads of Mission.

The European Missions in Kampala would like to thank everyone who participated in the nomination process and express their gratitude for the excellent cooperation and the outstanding work of the Ugandan Human Rights Defenders and their organisations.