

Stand up for someone's rights today

By Billy Rwothungeyo

Uganda today joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International Human Rights Day. It is the day on which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on December 10, 1948.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a landmark document in the history of human rights and, ultimately, the history of mankind.

People from different backgrounds and cultures came together from all over the world and agreed on basic human rights, which they said should be respected in all countries.

This year's theme is *Stand up for someone's rights today*.

"On Human Rights Day, let us recommit to guaranteeing the fundamental freedoms and protecting the human rights of all," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a statement ahead of the day.

Take a stand

Meanwhile, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, says it is time for each one of us to step up for human rights.

"There is no action that is too small: wherever you are, you can make a difference. Together, let's take a stand for more humanity."

Dr Katebalirwe Amooti Wa Irumba, the acting chairperson of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, says we should take stock of what we have achieved and failed to achieve in the area of human rights in our country and work towards making bigger gains, as we commemorate this year's International Human Rights Day.

Katebalirwe made the remarks while reading out a statement jointly issued by the commission, the UN office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Uganda, Human Rights Network-Uganda, ACTV, Human Rights Centre Uganda, AHURIO, Kumi Human Rights Initiative, Inter Aid, FHRI, Chapter Four and Refugee Law Project.

He used the occasion to assure Ugandans that the National Action Plan for Human Rights (NAP) is on course and will be launched before the year ends.

"During the UN Universal Periodic Review of 2012, government committed itself to developing a National Action Plan for Human Rights (NAP) to guide human rights interventions in the country. The Uganda Human Rights Commission offered technical support to government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to develop NAP through countrywide consultations.

Activities

To commemorate the day, a procession, led by the chief walker and chief guest, Kahinda Otafiire, the minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs has been planned from CHOGM square near the Pparliamentary buildings, through the streets of Kampala to the railway grounds.

At these grounds, besides the commemorative speeches, awards will be given out to 10 human rights defenders who have stood up and defended the rights of other persons, either knowingly or unknowingly.

The commemorations started much earlier in Uganda, with a series of activities lined up in the lead to the December 10.

Several inter-university debates were held across the country to gauge the awareness and knowledge university students have about human rights. These debates were held last month and pitted nine universities; Kabale University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Gulu University, Ndejje University, Makerere University, Kyambogo University, Makerere University Business School, Nkumba University and Uganda Christian University.

The winners of this debate will be recognised today at the ceremony.

On December 9, a community dialogue was planned and was held in Fort Portal, championed by the African Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims, under the theme: *Stand up for someone's rights today*, which also happens to be the theme for this year's commemorations.

On the same day, a public dialogue, spearheaded by the Human Rights



PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES CAME TOGETHER FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD AND AGREED ON BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

Centre Uganda on the International Human Rights Defenders day, was held at Hotel Africana in Kampala.

Those who want to follow commemorations around the world, especially on the popular micro-blogging site Twitter can follow the hash tag #Standup4HumanRights, #HumanRightsDay.

Human Rights in Uganda

Human rights in Uganda are recognised by the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, which has a Bill of Rights.

The same Constitution also establishes Uganda Human Rights Commission, which at that point was an important milestone as Uganda had just left behind nearly two decades of instability.

The commission was established under the provisions of Article 51(1) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda and its functions and powers were operationalised under the Uganda Human Rights Act of 1997.

At the sub-regional level, Uganda is party to the East African Community Treaty, whose fundamental principles include the promotion and protection of human rights in the regional bloc.

The Constitution affords citizens with a catalogue of rights. These are inherent to you as a human being, and are not conferred upon you by the state.

As we commemorate the Human Rights Day, have you taken time to reflect on human rights in your country? Now that you know the rights that you have, whether you are in school, at work or even in a taxi, you can still stand for someone's human rights?

INHERENT RIGHTS OF A UGANDAN

- Equality and freedom from discrimination
- Right to life
- Right to personal liberty
- Protection from inhuman treatment
- Protection of property
- Right to privacy
- Right to a fair hearing
- Right to freedom of assembly and association
- Freedom of speech and expression
- Freedom of conscience and religion
- Freedom of movement
- Right to education
- Rights of the family
- Special provisions for disadvantaged groups
- Rights of women
- Rights of children
- Rights of persons with disabilities
- Rights of minorities.
- Right to culture and similar rights
- Civic rights and activities
- Right to a clean and healthy environment
- Economic rights
- Workers' rights
- Right of access to information
- Right to fair treatment in administrative decisions
- Restriction on fundamental and other human rights and freedoms

A victim who was tortured by a prison guard admitted in hospital. Torture is a violation of human rights

