

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENTALISTS (LTD).



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PRESS RELEASE

NAPE CALLS FOR UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF STUDENTS DETAINED FOR HOLDING A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF THE RECENT EUROPEAN UNION RESOLUTION ON THE EAST AFRICAN CRUDE OIL PIPELINE (EACOP)

On Wednesday 5th October 2022, nine (9) students from various Universities in Uganda were remanded to Luzira prison over allegations that they participated in a demonstration in support of the recent European Union Parliament resolution seeking to delay the construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) citing human rights and environmental abuse concerns.

NAPE is greatly concerned about the harsh manner in which the students were arrested by the police and the charge of “common nuisance” that was levelled against them before being remanded to Luzira prison. NAPE is convinced that the detention of these students is in contravention of the Ugandan Constitution which provides for freedom to assemble and demonstrate together with others under Article 29 (1) (d).

“The Government of Uganda should unconditionally release the nine students immediately. Their continued detention is a clear indication that the state is bent on intimidating and harassing everyone who raises a red flag on what might be going wrong in country’s development projects. This kind of harassment should stop because it is our collective duty as citizens to inform the government that all development projects should conform to the dictates of environmental and social justice,” Frank Muramuzi, the Executive Director of NAPE said on Thursday.

Muramuzi added, “It is a shame for the government to arrest peaceful citizens simply because they are critical of its undertakings. In any case, this EACOP and other oil development projects are public investments that should be kept under scrutiny by the citizens”.

The detained students are: Imran Ntabazi, a student at Gulu University, David Musiri and Vincent Lubega Nsamba, from Makerere University, and six Kyambogo University students identified as Gerald Wenani, Gongga Akisi, Marktom Kajubi, Benjamin Akiso, Alphonse Nkuruziza and Alex Waswa Lyazi.

“Recently we saw people demonstrating in Kampala and Hoima cities against the EU Parliament resolution on EACOP. It was their right to demonstrate and the police did not harass them. How come now those who demonstrate in favour of the resolution are singled out and detained by the state?” Muramuzi wondered.

He said that continuing to harass Ugandans for supporting the EU resolution on EACOP only serves to confirm the worries of the European Union and Ugandan public on the human rights situation in the country.

Background

15th September 2022, the European Union Parliament passed a resolution expressing concern about numerous social and environmental risks posed by both the Tilenga and EACOP oil and gas projects in Uganda and Tanzania calling for a temporary halt of the projects for at least one year re-thinking the best options to address the concerns.

NAPE therefore, demands the following:

- 1) Unconditional release of the detained students.
- 2) The legal fraternity and other human rights defenders should intervene and ensure that the students are released and they go back to school. Parents and guardians did not pay fees for their children to serve time in prison.
- 3) The Uganda government and the oil companies should address those issues raised by the EU instead of continuing to intimidate and arrest people because of talking about EACOP and other oil development projects in Uganda.

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