

For Immediate Release
Kampala | August 5, 2022

**Statement on the Shutdown of the Operations of Sexual Minorities Uganda
by the National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations**

On Wednesday, 3rd August 2022, the National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Bureau) the government body that regulates NGOs in Uganda, halted the operations of Sexual Minorities Uganda for non-registration with the NGO Bureau.

It should be noted that in 2012, Frank Mugisha and others applied to the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) under the Section 18 of the companies Act, 2012, for the reservation of the name of the proposed company. In a letter dated 16th February 2016, the URSB rejected the application to reserve the name 'Sexual Minorities Uganda' on the grounds that the name was "undesirable and un-registrable that the proposed company to be incorporated to advocate for the rights and wellbeing of Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer persons, which persons are engaged in activities labeled criminal acts under sec.145 of the Penal Code Act." A decision that was upheld by the High Court of Uganda.

The refusal to legalize SMUG's operations that seek to protect LGBTQ people who continue to face major discrimination in Uganda, actively encouraged by political and religious leaders was a clear indicator that the government of Uganda and its agencies are adamant and treat Ugandan gender and sexual minorities as second-class citizens. These further compromises efforts to demand for better health services and escalates the already volatile environment for the LGBTQ community.

"This is a clear witch-hunt rooted in systematic homophobia that is fueled by anti-gay and anti-gender movements that have infiltrated public offices aiming to influence legislation to erase the LGBTQ community." Frank Mugisha, Ugandan Gay Activist.

CALL TO ACTION

1. We urge the Government of Uganda as a signatory to major international and regional human rights instruments to uphold their obligations to protect all Ugandans regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics.

2. We urge the law enforcement institutions to desist from using the NGO Bureau pronouncement as a tool to witch-hunt, harass, torture, and arbitrarily arrest members of SMUG and the entire LGBTQ community in Uganda, as this has automatically escalated an already hostile environment.

3. Bilateral partners should continue to dialogue with the Government of Uganda on upholding Freedom of Association and Assembly and human rights of all within her boundaries.

4. We also call upon all civil society organizationS to strongly speak out and stand in solidarity with SMUG and the entire Ugandan LGBTQ Community. For further information, please contact:

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