



Uganda – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 October 2010

Information on police force in Uganda - corruption?

In a section headed “Role of the Police and Security Apparatus” the 2010 *United States Department of State* country report on Uganda states:

“The Uganda Police Force (UPF), under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has primary responsibility for law enforcement. The UPDF is the key armed force charged with external security but had partial responsibility for maintaining order in the north, where it was deployed to protect civilian IDPs from rebel attacks and to prevent violence resulting from interclan cattle raids in the Karamoja Region. The Internal Security Organization (ISO) and External Security Organization (ESO), key security agencies and intelligence-gathering entities under the direct control of the president and the minister of security, occasionally detained civilians. The CMI is legally under UPDF authority, although it often acted as a semiautonomous unit by detaining civilians suspected of rebel and terrorist activity, as did the ISO and ESO. The Joint Anti-terrorism Taskforce (JATT), a paramilitary group under the CMI, has no codified mandate but illegally detained numerous civilians suspected of rebel and terrorist activity. The JATT is a joint command whose members are drawn from the UPDF, police, ISO, and ESO. LDUs reinforced government efforts to protect civilians and sometimes participated in offensive military operations and carried out police functions.” (United States Department of State (11 March 2010) *2009 Human Rights Report: Uganda*)

This report also states:

“The UPF continued to be constrained by limited resources, including low pay and lack of vehicles, equipment, and training. Corruption and impunity were problems. By year's end, 24 police officers had been charged with corruption, although none had been discharged or dismissed for accepting bribes. The UPF Human Rights Desk investigated complaints of police abuses, including mismanagement of case papers, torture and harassment, unlawful arrest and detention, abuse of office, irregular or discreditable conduct, and corrupt practices. The UPF reported receiving 5,000 allegations of human rights violations and unprofessional conduct from January 2008 to September 2009 and stated it took action in response to 3,000 of these cases.” (ibid)

The Introduction to a report published by the *Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative* states:

“Uganda does not have a democratic, accountable police service. Instead, it has a heavily militarised, colonial-style regime police force that is firmly under the control of the ruling government. The interests of the Government are placed far ahead of the protection of Uganda's people. The police are responsible for widespread human rights violations, and they have not been

held to account.” (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (2006) *The Police, the People, the Politics: Police Accountability in Uganda*, p.1)

In a section headed “Corruption” this report states:

“In 1998, a Government survey of citizen perceptions of corruption in public services indicated that Ugandans rated the police as the most corrupt government institution by a wide margin. Of those who had come into direct contact with the police, 63% said they had paid a bribe to a police officer during the interaction. Of the 18,412 households surveyed, 60% rated the police as one of the three most corrupt institutions in government. A second survey was undertaken and released in 2003. The police force was singled out as the most corrupt government institution – over 43% of participants rated it extremely or largely corrupt. People’s experience of police corruption included police threatening to make arrests on false charges unless a bribe was paid. In 2005, a National Service Delivery Survey was conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics. The survey interviewed people in each of the 56 districts of Uganda to assess the availability of services, the utilisation of those services, and user satisfaction levels. The police were ranked as the most corrupt among all service providers.” (ibid, pp.9-10)

A section headed “The Sebutinde Commission” states:

“The Commission sat until May 2000 and found enormous evidence of widespread corruption, indiscipline and mismanagement at different levels of the Police Force. The Commission found:

- there was widespread evidence of corruption at all levels of the police, including the institutionalisation of bribing, false accounting and insider trading;
- that investigating officers induced complainants to drop charges and illegally released suspects from lawful custody;
- that police grossly mismanaged cases and extorted money from complainants to do their duties – for a payment, whole case files could be ‘disappeared’;
- the Government accepted that police work involved the taking of bribes;
- that placement in desirable posts depended largely on an officer’s ability to solicit bribes from the public and their willingness to provide a flow of the illegal proceeds to senior officers;
- that there was brazen indiscipline among police officers of all ranks and “a culture of impunity whereby officers get away with flagrant violations of human rights under their superiors’ noses”; and
- the CID was ‘slowly turning into a ‘Mafia-type’ organisation where the focus is no longer on detection and investigation of crime’ but on ‘conniving with criminals, equipping them to commit crime, and offering them protection against prosecution’.” (ibid, p.20)

A report from the *World Markets Research Centre* states:

“The Ugandan police force, more specifically the traffic division, has once again been identified as the most corruption state institution in the East African country. According to the findings of an integrity survey conducted back in 2003 by K2-Consults Uganda Ltd on behalf of the Inspector General Government, the traffic police division is perceived to be the most corrupt institution in Uganda ahead of the country’s tax-collecting body the Uganda

Revenue Authority (URA) and the now-defunct tender boards and the Electoral Commission (EC).” (World Markets Research Centre (15 August 2006) *Police Force Maintains Position as Uganda's Most Corrupt Institution*)

An *Inter Press Service* article on corruption in Uganda states:

“You are driving through the streets of the Ugandan capital and suddenly a traffic police officer waves you down. He immediately notices that the side-mirror on the passenger’s side is missing. He threatens to give you a penalty ticket that costs 50,000 shillings (25 dollars). But because you understand ‘the policeman’s language’, you automatically dig into your purse and discreetly squeeze a 10,000 shilling note (5 dollars) in to his palms. They call it ‘kitu kidogo’ a Swahili word for a bribe, literary meaning ‘something small.’ And that solves the problem. But an act of corruption has just occurred; an act that has become a way of life in the East African country where bribing a traffic policeman is cheaper than facing the long arm of the law.” (Inter Press Service (22 December 2009) *Uganda-Corruption – Where ‘Kitu Kidogo’ is Cheaper than Facing the Law*)

In a section headed “Police complaints authority” an *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* response to a request for information states:

“The UPF has established a Professional Standards Unit to handle complaints from the general public concerning the ‘misconduct’ of police personnel (Uganda n.d.h). According to an article in *The Monitor*, a Kampala-based newspaper, in May 2008, the Police Professional Standards Unit (PPSU) arrested 17 traffic police officers in Kampala for accepting bribes from motorists (*The Monitor* 9 May 2008). The article indicates that between the PPSU's establishment in July 2007 and the article's publication in May 2008, the PPSU uncovered 909 cases of alleged police misconduct and completed investigations into just over half of them (*ibid.*). Police officers under investigation reportedly receive half their salary until their case is closed and, if found guilty, are dismissed from the service without benefits or pension (*ibid.*). Information on the number of police officers who have been dismissed since July 2007 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (3 June 2008) *UGA102830.E – Somalia: Overview of the police force, including structure, size and division of duties; police militarization; existence of police complaints authority and recourse available to individuals who file complaints against the police*)

An *Institute for War & Peace Reporting* article on anti-corruption measures instituted by the Ugandan government states:

“The Ugandan parliament launched a sweeping probe of the police force in October 2007, which was ranked by the Inspectorate of Government, an independent body, as the most corrupt institution in the country. The parliamentary investigation prompted a public inquiry which contributed towards the establishment of an anti-corruption court in the country - and Nabakooba says that since its launch, fewer officers who abuse their position are escaping justice. But this has not deterred some within the force from breaking the law. The Inspectorate of Government suggests that corrupt practices are most common within the Criminal Investigations Department,

CID, and the traffic police.” (Institute for War & Peace Reporting (4 August 2010) *Kampala Losing Patience With Corrupt Police*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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