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A THREAT TO ALL! – THE UNIVERSAL DANGER OF THE PROTECTION OF SOVEREIGNTY BILL, 2026

A JOINT PRESS STATEMENT BY UGANDAN CITIZENS

Thursday, April 9, 2026, Kampala, Uganda

1. INTRODUCTION

We stand before you as Ugandans representing a diversity of Citizens in the formal and informal sectors; market women and men, coffee farmers, Artistes and creatives, faith-based organizations, representatives of citizen organizations, parents, sisters and brothers of Ugandans in the diaspora, to address an existential threat to our nation. The proposed, still in draft “Protection of Sovereignty Bill”, 2026, arrives at a critical juncture in Uganda’s history. While officially framed as a shield against foreign interference, our rigorous analysis reveals it to be a dangerous legislative overreach seeking to address no concrete legal gap.

Uganda already possesses a robust legal framework—including the Anti-Money Laundering Act, the Anti Terrorism Act, and various national security laws—capable of addressing any external threat. This Bill adds no value; instead, it serves as a vehicle to overthrow the spirit of the 1995 Constitution, shifting power away from the people and consolidating it within unchecked executive agencies.

2. WHAT THE BILL IS ABOUT: A REVERSAL OF POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

This Bill is not about national pride; it is about centralized control.

- a) **De Facto Stripping of Citizenship (Clauses 1 & 4):** By defining a "foreigner" to include any person "residing outside Uganda" (Clause 1), the Bill effectively reclassifies the diaspora as non-citizens. This creates a legal framework to disenfranchise millions, contradicting Article 15 of the Constitution and the Citizenship and Immigration Control Act.
- b) **Ministerial Absolutism (Clause 29 & 30):** The Bill violates Article 1 of the Constitution by granting the Minister for Internal Affairs unilateral power to create new criminal offenses and amend financial penalties via statutory instruments, bypassing essential Parliamentary oversight.

3. THE DANGERS: AN ASSAULT ON PRIVACY AND ECONOMY

- a) **Invasion of Privacy (Clause 28):** In a direct assault on the Right to Privacy (Article 27), the Bill grants authorized officers the power to conduct warrantless inspections of any

"premises"—including private family homes—suspected of housing "foreign agent" activity.

- b) **Economic Stagnation (Clauses 14 & 15):** The Bill criminalizes progressive business financing. Any entity with foreign capital or "joint venture" arrangements must register as a foreign agent. This reframes vital technology transfers and capital inflows as suspicious activities, suffocating local growth.
- c) **The Hypocrisy of State Deals:** While targeting citizens, the Government enters executive-led deals like the \$2.4B Health MOU, which permits the transfer of Ugandans' sensitive medical data without transparency. Furthermore, since the state is donor-subsidized, under Clause 1, the Government itself fits the definition of a "foreign agent."
- d) **A Shift Toward the Authoritarian League** The Protection of Sovereignty Bill 2026 poses a grave threat to Uganda's democratic fabric by weaponizing "transparency" to crush dissent through unrealistic and draconian penalties. While the government falsely claims to benchmark this law against the UK, Canada, and the USA, the Bill fundamentally departs from these democratic models—which protect citizens and investments—and instead mirrors the repressive "foreign agent" frameworks of Russia, Nicaragua, Georgia, and North Korea.
- e) **Liquidation-by-Penalty:** The proposed penalties under this Bill represent a significant departure from international legal norms regarding proportionality and administrative fairness. By establishing prison terms of up to 20 years for individuals and institutional fines reaching UGX 4 billion, the framework imposes punitive measures that can exceed the value of a technical breach by over 1,000%. Such measures are inconsistent with the standards set by progressive democracies and international bodies, such as the EU's Defence of Democracy Package and the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association, which emphasize that sanctions should be proportionate and preceded by warnings.
- f) **The False Bench-marking Narrative:** Furthermore, while the government cites the legal frameworks of the UK, Canada, and the USA as benchmarks, the actual provisions more closely align with restrictive models seen in Nicaragua and Russia. Unlike the US Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which limits sentences for non-compliance to five years, this Bill utilizes criminal incarceration and lopsided fines to target private commercial and humanitarian activities. This move risks creating "aid fatigue" and the withdrawal of development partners, ultimately threatening the quality of life for citizens and replacing institutional stability with a model that prioritizes state suspicion over international standards of association.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

- a) **For the Diaspora:** The Bill reclassifies over a million Ugandans residing abroad as “foreigners,” stripping them of their inherent citizenship rights in direct violation of the 1995 Constitution and existing dual citizenship laws. By requiring rigorous income declarations for those seeking "green pastures" abroad, the state is effectively discouraging the global mobility of its own people while failing to create local alternatives.
- b) **For Families and the \$2.5 Billion Remittance Lifeblood:** Diaspora remittances are a primary pillar of our economy, outperforming almost every other sector. This Bill criminalizes the act of sending money for school fees, medical bills, and general welfare. By placing "North Korean-style" restrictions on these funds, the state is cutting off the lifeblood of millions of Ugandan households, leading to an immediate domestic welfare crisis.
- c) **For Job Creation and Employment:** Remittances do more than buy food; they fund construction, farming, and housing projects that employ millions of Ugandans. Restricting these flows will lead to a massive collapse in local employment and block entrepreneurs from transferring the start-up capital needed to build businesses at home.
- d) **For Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Banking:** The Bill creates artificial "compliance chokepoints" by requiring Ministerial approval for grants, loans, or investments exceeding UGX 400,000,000. This bureaucracy will paralyze mobile money networks, signal to the world that Uganda is "closed for business," and drive global investors to more stable, liberalized neighboring economies.
- e) **For Artistes, Creatives, and Musicians:** The Bill effectively places the creative arts under military-style surveillance, treating cultural expression as a potential tool for "foreign subversion." By categorizing income from international digital platforms like Spotify, YouTube, and iTunes as foreign funding, the state could technically brand every streaming artist a "foreign agent." Furthermore, the requirement for Ministerial permits to engage in joint projects or international record label deals threatens to ban cross-border collaborations. For musicians and creatives, working on a project with a foreign entity without state clearance could result in jail time of over 20 years, fines of UGX 2 billion, or even the catastrophic threat of loss of citizenship. This creates a "creative lockdown," stifling innovation, stripping artists of their global revenue, and forcing Uganda's brightest talents into silence or exile.
- f) **For Faith-Based Institutions, Religious groups, and Civil Society:** Our Churches, Mosques, and Temples are the silent backbone of the nation, providing over 40% of Uganda’s healthcare and education. The Bill places these sacred missions under state siege by labeling international missionary support, global partnerships, and even diaspora tithes as "foreign interference." Under Clause 1, any institution "subsidized" by a foreigner is branded an agent—a move of profound hypocrisy given the State’s own heavy donor dependence. This creates a "License to Heal" barrier, where vital capital

inflows for faith-based hospitals are reframed as suspicious "foreign-controlled" activities, suffocating the social safety nets the vulnerable rely on.

- g) Furthermore, by reclassifying the diaspora as "foreigners," a simple tithe sent from a relative abroad technically brands a home congregation as a "foreign agent," criminalizing the inherent right of citizens to support their faith. The Bill does not stop at the church gate; Clause 28 grants authorized officers the power to conduct warrantless inspections of any "premises," effectively abolishing the sanctity of the pulpit and the privacy of the sanctuary. This aggressive oversight allows the state to treat the private homes of religious leaders and congregants as regulatory spaces subject to arbitrary intrusion.
- h) By categorizing the mandate to care for the poor as "foreign agent" activity, the Bill triggers a "brain drain" of partners who provide the clean water, legal aid, and advocacy that the State neglects. Ultimately, with institutional fines of UGX 4 billion—a 1,000% penalty designed for immediate liquidation—this Bill ensures that compassion is treated as a crime and the "city of refuge" is dismantled.
- i) **For Government Revenue and the Tax Base:** The Protection of Sovereignty Bill 2026 is fundamentally self-defeating for government revenue, as it actively shrinks the tax base by discouraging the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and diaspora remittances that the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) relies on. A contracting economy will inevitably force the government to impose even more unbearable burdens on an already overtaxed populace, where current proposals for the 2026/27 financial year are already exorbitant: Pay As You Earn (PAYE) for high-income earners is proposed to increase from 30% to 40% for those earning above Shs 10 million monthly, fuel excise is set to rise by Shs 200 per litre, the duty on sugar is tripling from Shs 100 to Shs 300 per kilogram, motorcycle registration fees are jumping from Shs 200,000 to Shs 500,000, and stamp duty on land transfers is doubling from 1.5% to 3%. The implementation of this Bill will only exacerbate these fiscal pressures, driving more citizens and businesses out of the formal sector and further destabilizing Uganda's fragile revenue landscape.
- j) **For Development Partners:** The era of mutual cooperation is under threat. Partners face an impossible choice: operate under constant state surveillance and risk the criminalization of their staff under vague "disruptive activity" clauses, or withdraw their support entirely from Uganda's governance and social sectors.

5. CALL TO ACTION

We, the people gathered here, demand and call upon all stakeholders to take the following urgent actions:

- 1) **To the Government of Uganda:** We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, in its entirety. It is a redundant piece of legislation that serves only to undermine the economic and social fabric of our nation.
- 2) **To the Parliament of Uganda:** We urge you to exercise your oversight mandate and stand with the people. Reject any legislation that criminalizes remittances, family support, and the fundamental rights of Ugandans. Protect our economy; do not allow the state to create "chokepoints" that stifle our progress.
- 3) **To the Media:** Act as the primary information shield. Journalists and outlets must simplify the Bill's complex clauses for the public—especially via radio and local languages—to expose how it directly threatens the "common man." Provide a platform for legal and economic experts to voice constitutional dangers without fear of censorship.
- 4) **To the Diaspora:** Despite being unfairly labeled "foreigners," you are a vital pillar of our economy. You must lobby international partners and human rights bodies to highlight the severe risks this Bill poses to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Form unified blocs to petition the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asserting your non-negotiable rights under existing dual citizenship laws.
- 5) **To the Private Sector:** Business leaders must issue joint memorandums through associations such as PSFU, KACITA, and UMA. You must make it clear to the government that this Bill makes Uganda "high-risk" for international banks and global investors, potentially leading to a total freeze on credit and external capital.
- 6) **To Development Partners:** Conduct formal reviews of aid effectiveness and communicate clearly to the government that this Bill creates an environment incompatible with international standards of cooperation, transparency, and human rights.
- 7) **To the Citizens of Uganda:** This is your country. Organize local petitions and engage your Area MPs directly. It is vital to publicly document and share how this Bill will impact your family's remittances, medical care, and household freedoms.

6. CONCLUSION

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, represents a calculated effort to dismantle the constitutional safeguards that protect individual liberties and participatory governance. It replaces collective self-governance with unchecked, centralized authority. Uganda is not North Korea. We have built a liberalized economy and a participatory democracy that thrives on global cooperation and the hard work of our citizens both at home and abroad. Uganda is large enough for all of us its people to live together in harmony without victimizing each other. Paradoxically, while the government seeks to criminalize "foreign agents," the state remains critically dependent on the very foreign aid, loans, and diaspora remittances it now seeks to persecute. You cannot bite the hand that feeds the nation while claiming to protect its

sovereignty. To protect the stability and future of our nation, this Bill must be rejected by us all in its entirety.

Uganda's sovereignty belongs to the people, not state agencies!

FOR GOD and MY COUNTRY!