



NATIONAL CHRISTIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

📍 P.O.Box 7062 Kampala - Uganda
🏠 Plot 1573, Munyonyo
✉ info@ncsayouth.com
🌐 www.ncsayouth.com
☎ +256 786 766832

TO:

The Clerk to Parliament
Parliament of Uganda
Parliamentary Buildings
P.O. Box 7178
Kampala, Uganda.

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The Chairperson
Joint Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs
and
Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs
Parliament of Uganda
Kampala, Uganda.

RE: SUBMISSION OF MEMORANDUM ON THE PROTECTION OF SOVEREIGNTY BILL, 2026 AND APPLICATION TO APPEAR BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND THE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

We refer to the Public Notice issued by the Clerk to Parliament inviting submissions on the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, which was read for the First Time on Wednesday, 15 April 2026 and subsequently referred to the Joint Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs and the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs for detailed scrutiny.

We write to respectfully submit our memorandum on the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 in response to the public call for submissions issued by the Office of the Clerk to Parliament following the First Reading of the Bill and its referral to the Joint Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs and the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. We further respectfully apply to appear before the Joint Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs and the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs to present and clarify the concerns and recommendations contained in our submission.



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The National Christian Students Association (NCSA) is a legally registered, interdenominational student-led Christian Association operating across secondary schools and institutions of higher learning in Uganda. NCSA is committed to the spiritual formation, leadership development, mentorship, and holistic empowerment of students, equipping them to live out their faith while contributing positively to society and national development.

We present this memorandum as part of our ongoing engagement in promoting student leadership development, civic participation, and constitutional awareness among young people in higher institutions of learning. Our submission reflects the perspectives of student communities whose participation in mentorship, leadership training, academic exchange, and civic engagement may be affected by the provisions of the Bill as currently drafted, and who may wish to directly engage the Joint Committee on Defence and Internal Affairs and the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs during the deliberations.

The memorandum outlines key constitutional, legal, and practical concerns arising from the Bill, particularly in relation to student-led organisations, mentorship structures, and campus-based leadership development initiatives. It further provides constructive, evidence-based recommendations aimed at strengthening the Bill while ensuring alignment with the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, existing legal frameworks, and Uganda's broader obligations to protect civic space, education, and participation in governance.

In light of the foregoing, we most respectfully request that the Committee accords us the opportunity to appear before it and be heard in person, given that we represent a significant body of students and young leaders across tertiary institutions whose participation in leadership development, mentorship, and civic engagement stands to be substantially affected should the Bill pass in its current form.

We remain available for any further engagement or clarification that the Committees may require. For further information or correspondence, kindly contact our representative via: 0785999299 or olynnedinance@gmail.com

SIGNATORY

For and on behalf of:
National Christian Students Association (NCSA)

Name: Lynn Edinace Okepu
Title: -Director-
Signature: [Handwritten Signature]
Date: 23rd April 2026

[Handwritten Signature]



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MEMORANDUM TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON DEFENCE AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND THE COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS ON THE PROTECTION OF SOVEREIGNTY BILL, 2026

From:
National Christian Students Association (NCSA)

Date:
23rd April 2026.

INTRODUCTION

The National Christian Students Association (NCSA) is a legally registered, interdenominational student-led Christian Association operating across; secondary schools, tertiary institutions and institutions of higher learning in Uganda. NCSA is committed to the spiritual growth, leadership development, mentorship, and holistic empowerment of students, equipping them to live out their faith while contributing positively to society.

In performing this role, NCSA operates within the constitutional framework of Uganda, particularly under:

1. Article 29(1)(c) – Freedom of assembly and association
2. Article 29(1)(a) – Freedom of expression
3. Article 30 – Right to education
4. Article 38(1) – Right to participate in the affairs of government, individually or through civic organisations
5. Article 37 – Right to culture and religion (where applicable to faith-based identity and expression)

We respectfully submit this memorandum to the Joint Committee reviewing the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026.

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

The NCSA identifies the following key concerns:

1. Overly broad definitions of “foreigner” and “agent of a foreigner” that may capture student organisations and mentorship networks
2. Restrictions on policy engagement and civic participation by students
3. Risk of criminal liability for student leadership, advocacy, and mentorship activities



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4. Funding restrictions that may disrupt student development programs and international mentorship partnerships
5. Excessive ministerial discretion in registration, enforcement, and classification of actors
6. Potential duplication with existing university governance, NGO, and financial regulatory frameworks
7. Risk of selective enforcement affecting student organisations and faith-based campus movements
8. Lack of precision in offences, contrary to the principle of legality under Article 28(12)

SUMMARY OF KEY CONSTITUTIONAL CONCERNS

The Bill raises concerns in relation to:

1. Article 29 – Freedom of expression and association
2. Article 38 – Participation in governance and civic processes
3. Article 21 – Equality and non-discrimination (risk of selective application)
4. Article 30 – Right to education and student development
5. Article 43 – General limitation clause (necessity and proportionality test)
6. Article 28(12) – Principle of legality (clarity and non-vagueness in criminal offences)

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE BILL WITH CONSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

GENERAL OBSERVATION

From a constitutional perspective, the Bill introduces a framework that may affect student-led organisations engaged in mentorship, leadership development, and civic engagement.

These activities are protected under:

1. Article 29(1)(c) – Freedom of association
2. Article 38(1) – Civic participation
3. Article 30 – Educational development and student formation

Any restriction must therefore meet the Article 43 test: reasonable, justifiable in a free and democratic society & proportionate to the objective.



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CLAUSE 1: FOREIGNER AND FOREIGN AGENT DEFINITIONS

Constitutional concern:

The inclusion of diaspora citizens and broadly financed entities risks affecting Ugandan students abroad and alumni networks.

This engages:

1. Article 29(1)(c) – Freedom of association
2. Article 30 – Right to education and academic development
3. Article 38(1) – Participation in civic life

Issue:

Reclassifying Ugandan citizens abroad as “foreigners” raises concerns under:

1. Article 21 – Equality before the law
2. Article 14–17 (Citizenship provisions, general constitutional scheme)

Recommendation:

Exclude Ugandan citizens in diaspora from the definition.

CLAUSE 5: PROHIBITION ON FOREIGN INTERESTS

Constitutional concern:

This clause directly affects:

1. Article 29(1)(a) – Freedom of expression
2. Article 29(1)(c) – Freedom of association
3. Article 38(1) – Participation in governance

Issue:

The prohibition on promoting “foreign interests against Uganda” lacks precision. Under *Article 28(12)*: Criminal offences must be clearly defined and not vague. The clause may create an effect on: student leadership expression, civic engagement and mentorship engagements.

Recommendation:

Narrow the scope to exclude: academic discourse, student leadership training, mentorship and faith-based engagements.



CLAUSE 6–8: PRIOR APPROVAL FOR SERVICES

Constitutional concern:

This affects:

1. Article 30 – Right to education
2. Article 38(1) – Civic participation
3. Article 29(1)(c) – Association

Issue:

Student organisations and institutions provide mentorship, training and community service. Delays or restrictions may violate the Article 43 proportionality requirement.

Recommendation:

Introduce exemptions for: registered student organisations, university-recognised associations, as well as educational and mentorship initiatives.

CLAUSE 7: POLICY INFLUENCE RESTRICTIONS

Constitutional concern:

This directly engages:

1. Article 38(1) – Right to participate in governance
2. Article 29(1)(a) – Freedom of expression
3. Article 29(1)(c) – Association

Issue:

Students are key contributors to civic dialogue and policy engagement.

The legal principle under Article 43 is that any limitation must not; negate a constitutional right or render it ineffective in practice.

Recommendation:

Delete or clarify to exclude: student civic forums, academic policy discussions, leadership training spaces and related educational activities.



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CLAUSE 13: ECONOMIC SABOTAGE

Constitutional concern:

Article 40 – Right to practice a lawful occupation

Article 30 – Educational and institutional development

Issue:

Student organisations often run; conferences, outreach activities, educational programs and overbroad criminalisation may violate Article 28(12) (clarity requirement).

Recommendation:

Narrow the definition to intentional economic sabotage and exclude the educational and student-led economic initiatives.

CLAUSE 22: FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Constitutional concern:

This caps and regulates foreign funding with ministerial concern. This may disrupt student mentorship programs, conferences and intentional partnerships.

Issue:

Student organisations depend on: alumni networks, international mentorship bodies, faith-based partnerships. The restrictions must pass the Article 43 proportionality test.

Recommendation:

Replace prior approval with disclosure-based systems under financial laws; exempt student organisations under regulated institutional frameworks.



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CLAUSE 33: DISRUPTIVE FUNDING

Constitutional concern & issue:

It criminalizes funding related to disruptive activities. The vagueness of the clause may criminalize student advocacy and leadership mobilisation.

Recommendation:

Define “disruptive activities” narrowly and limit them to intentional political interference or violence.

CONCLUSION

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 addresses a legitimate constitutional objective of safeguarding Uganda’s sovereignty under Article 1 of the Constitution. However, several provisions, as currently drafted, raise concerns regarding constitutional compliance, proportionality, and clarity.

From the perspective of the National Christian Students Association (NCSA), the Bill may unintentionally affect student leadership development, mentorship ecosystems, and civic participation within tertiary institutions.

The key concern is the lack of clear distinction between legitimate student leadership, mentorship, and academic engagement and harmful foreign political interference.

We respectfully recommend that the Committee consider:


1. narrowing overly broad definitions
2. introducing student and educational exemptions
3. replacing approval-based systems with transparent disclosure mechanisms
4. strengthening judicial oversight and safeguards
5. ensuring compliance with Articles 29, 30, 38, 43, and 28(12) of the Constitution

NCSA remains committed to constructive engagement and to supporting both national sovereignty and the development of ethical, visionary student leaders in Uganda.

For further information or correspondence, kindly contact our representative, Lynn Edinance Olepus, via 0785999299 or olynnedinance@gmail.com



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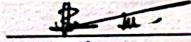
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SIGNATORY

For and on behalf of:
National Christian Students Association (NCSA)

Name: Lynn Ednance Opar.

Title: Director.

Signature: 

Date: 23rd April 2026

