RADICAL NEW BAR

UGANDA LAW SOCIETY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# ULS CONDEMNS POLITICAL PERSECUTION OF HON. MIRIA MATEMBE FOLLOWING ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE, *DEMANDS IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF CHARGES AND INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION*

***Kampala, Uganda – 30 June 2026:*** The Uganda Law Society (ULS) is deeply alarmed by the abduction, enforced disappearance, and subsequent politically motivated prosecution of **Hon. Miria Matembe**, a senior citizen, respected lawyer, and prominent civil society activist.

On **Sunday, 28 June 2026**, Hon. Matembe was forcibly abducted from a relative's home by armed men claiming to be security officers. She was held **incommunicado** at an undisclosed location for several days. This operation followed a public manhunt that was openly celebrated on social media by the Chief of Defence Forces of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF).

On **30 June 2026,** Hon. Matembe was charged at Luzira Magistrates Court with **Promoting Sectarianism contrary to Section 38(1)(d) of the Penal Code Act, Cap 128**. The Director of Public Prosecutions, Mr. Lino Anguzu, consented to the charges without obtaining representations from the accused.

The particulars of the offence relate to statements allegedly made on a television platform **criticising government policy**. This is a blatantly unconstitutional attempt to criminalise protected political speech, contrary to the recent decision of the Constitutional Court in ***Alternative Digitalk v. AG***, Consolidated Petitions 34, 37 & 42 of 2022.

Citing court hours, Magistrate Sheila Gloria Atim remanded the 73-year-old **former member of the Uganda Constitutional Commission** to Luzira Prison despite her stated severe pain and need for urgent medical examination, prioritizing time over health and liberty.

**Grave Violations of the Law**

This sequence of events reveals multiple serious constitutional and legal breaches, including:

- **Enforced disappearance** and arbitrary deprivation of liberty and other rights in violation of **Articles 20, 21, 23, 24, 27, 42, 43,** and **44** of the Constitution of Uganda;
- Unlawful military involvement in civilian arrest and detention, contrary to **Article 221** and the doctrine of separation of powers;
- Failure to adhere to lawful investigation, arrest and detention procedures under the Police Act, Cap 324, including a **Section 28** request for voluntary assistance in the investigation, and the requirement to detain suspects in gazetted facilities;
- Suppression of freedom of expression and political opinion protected under **Article 29**;
- Political persecution and extrajudicial detention prohibited under **Article 43** of the Constitution.

These actions also constitute clear breaches of Uganda's obligations under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**, the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights**, and customary international law on enforced disappearances.

**Call to Action**

The ULS strongly condemns this **blatant abuse of state power** and the **weaponisation of the criminal justice system** to silence dissent. The pattern of enforced disappearances followed by selective prosecution poses a grave threat to constitutional democracy and the rule of law in Uganda.

**We therefore demand that:**

1. The Director of Public Prosecutions **immediately withdraw** all charges against Hon. Miria Matembe;
2. A full, independent, and transparent **investigation be conducted into her abduction, enforced disappearance, and treatment while in custody**, with all perpetrators held accountable;
3. Hon. Matembe's rights to liberty, dignity, and security be fully restored **without further delay;**
4. The Government of Uganda **immediately ceases** the criminalisation of legitimate political expression and criticism.

The ULS further calls upon the international community — particularly the **United Nations** (especially the Special Rapporteurs on arbitrary detention, freedom of expression, and human rights defenders), the African Union, the **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**, the **European Union**, the **United States**, the **United Kingdom,** and international bar associations — to urgently engage the Government of Uganda on this matter.

**The rule of law in Uganda is under severe threat. The ULS will continue to monitor this case closely and provide all necessary legal support to Hon. Matembe and other victims of political persecution.**

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**President, Uganda Law Society**