



10th March 2016, Geneva

The 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council called to utilize Election Observer Mission reports on Uganda's February 2016 General Elections.

The Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) has called on the UN Human Rights Council to utilize the February 2016 Election Observer Mission reports authored by both Domestic and International Election Observer Missions in order to initiate and inform its dialogue with the Government of Uganda on the state of electoral democracy and the situation of human rights in the country.

Speaking at a Side Event organized by the East and Horn of Africa Human rights Defenders Program (EHAHRDP), OMCT, ISHR and FIDH on 10th March 2016 in Geneva - along side the 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council - Ms. Sheila Muwanga, while acknowledging the relatively peaceful election day on 18th February 2016, flagged up some of the challenges documented with respect to the management of the elections and the surfacing human rights issues which undermined the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

The disregard and non-implementation of the electoral reform proposals mooted by various stakeholders; the in-efficiencies of the Electoral Commission in administering its logistical functions; the irregularities experienced during the voting processes, the persisting lack of public trust and confidence in the Electoral Commission; the legal and procedural discrepancies in the process of compiling the National Voters' Register and; the limited voter information and education by the Electoral Commission were some of the challenges on record.

Police brutality and restrictions of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, attacks on journalists and media houses in the course of their work; the harassment, arrest and detention of opposition politicians along with some of their supporters; the undue limitation on freedom of expression and access to information rights arising from the social media blackout sanctioned by the Uganda Communications Commission on 18th February 2016, all painted a grim picture of the human rights situation during the just concluded elections.

Journalists probably received the biggest brunt of harassment. According to Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda, over Seventy (70) cases including physical assault, destruction of journalists' work equipment, intimidation, arrest, detention and closure of a media house have been registered from October 2015 to 26th February 2016. Journalists have been victims of assault, malicious damage of property, arrests and detention with no prosecution, incidences of denial of access to news and have been accused of biased and unprofessional reporting.

In the midst of a highly contested election, FHRI and FIDH thus called on the UN Human Rights Council to take advantage of the events leading to Uganda's Universal Periodic Review before the Council scheduled for November 2016, to engage on

these issues and to publically denounce the harassment of human rights defenders and political opponents in Uganda.