



PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PREVENTION OF STIGMATIZATION AND CORONA VIRUS-RELATED VIOLENCE SHOULD BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF NATIONAL STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH COVID 19 IN UGANDA

Justice Access Point (JAP) stands in solidarity with the entire Ugandan citizens and the rest of the world in face of the current global crisis arising out of COVID 19 pandemic. The first confirmed case of COVID 19 in Uganda was reported on 21st March 2020 and since then the confirmed cases have risen.

Uganda has unveiled a raft of measures aimed at preventing and containing the spread of COVID -19 in the Country. The measures have regularly been updated in tandem with the level of threat registered.

Uganda is a country that has gold-standard record for her welcoming policy to refugees and being homely to foreign visitors or immigrants; and good community neighborliness. This however seems to be constrained by the current situation occasioned by the spread of the COVID 19.

As the COVID-19 statistics in Uganda surge, there are reported incidents of community restlessness, and intolerance towards persons that have recently travelled abroad; and foreigners especially from high-risk countries threatening with isolated incidents of corona virus–related micro-aggressions, harassment, hate speech or threat of violence.

For instance, *Billy Thiart, an investor of South African origin, on Sunday 22 March 2020, survived lynching by residents of Kyabirwa village in Budondo sub-county, Jinja district.* This followed his alleged Facebook post where he boasted of having arrived through Entebbe airport without being quarantined for coronavirus. This situation ought to be addressed to forestall the manifestation of episodes of Corona-related Identity-based violence or the snowballing of xenophobia. Unless this is urgently addressed, it is likely to drive people away from g screened, tested or quarantined or in the extreme cases leading to communal violence.

In view of this Justice Access Point:

1. Encourages all citizens and persons currently in Uganda to adhere to the WHO guidelines and the issued government guidelines on CODIV-19;
2. Encourages all citizens and persons currently in Uganda to avoid personal behaviors that will flagrantly expose the general public to the risk of contracting and thereby attracting hostility to self;
3. Encourages stakeholders to refrain partaking of hate speech and any form incitement of violence against persons suspected of acting in breach of CODIV-19 guidelines. To this end, we would like to urge citizens exercise responsibility and desist from pedaling information likely to incite hatred or

violence against any member of the community based on the identity and categorization of sickness.

4. Encourages government of Uganda to ensure that all measures taken including quarantine and possible lock-down are executed in a manner that respects the rights of all including foreigners and stateless persons.

About JAP

Justice Access Point (JAP) is a local civil society organization in Uganda that makes strategic interventions to prevent atrocities, including through atrocity prevention education, supporting national efforts to prevent hate and dangerous speech, developing and implementing early warning systems, and utilizing international and regional mechanisms to prevent atrocity crimes. JAP has four areas of programming: (1) atrocity prevention education and capacity-building, (2) prevention of hate and dangerous speech, (3) prevention of violent extremism, and (4) prevention of statelessness.

For more inquires please contact:

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