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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
KAMPALA**

AFIEGO AND PARTNERS' RESPONSE TO NGO BUREAU SUSPENSION: GOV'T IS TARGETING CRITICAL CSOS

AFIEGO and its partners are operating legally

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) has seen an August 20, 2021 press release through which the NGO Bureau says that it has halted the operations of 23 civil society organisations (CSOs). The bureau indicates that these CSOs are operating with expired non-governmental organisation (NGO) permits. Other CSOs' operations have been indefinitely suspended.

AFIEGO and seven of our partners are among the organisations whose operations the NGO Bureau **says have been halted.**

AFIEGO'S RESPONSE

We would like to respond as follows:

- AFIEGO was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee (number 106812) on March 18, 2009.
- AFIEGO was incorporated by the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) under the 2012 Companies Act.
- AFIEGO operates as a non-profit company and complies with the relevant laws that govern over non-profit companies.
- To this end, AFIEGO files annual returns with URSB and complies with all other legal requirements that non-profit companies should.
- AFIEGO's partners are also operating legally and comply with relevant laws.
- The matter of the suspension has been referred to AFIEGO's lawyer who will respond to the NGO Bureau.
- Legal options to end the targeted delegitimisation, defamation, public shaming and other tactics aimed at stopping CSOs such as AFIEGO and our partners from playing their work of holding government accountable are being assessed.

- In the interim, AFIEGO and its partners have resolved to file a court case against the Attorney General (Ugandan government) to stop the intimidation and delegitimation of CSOs.

CIVIC SPACE CONCERNS

AFIEGO takes note of the fact that seven of the organisations whose operations the NGO Bureau says that it has halted are AFIEGO’s partners. AFIEGO and its partners have been targeted because they play key human as well as environmental rights protection roles in the oil and gas sector. The organisations also hold government accountable with neither fear nor favour.

Several of the other organisations whose operations have been halted or indefinitely suspended also play key accountability roles in the human rights and civic education spheres.

For many years now, government has targeted these and other CSOs with threats of deregistration, freezing of their bank accounts, arrests, office raids and others.

AFIEGO and our partners’ staff have been targeted and arrests have been made. In September 2020 for instance, the AFIEGO Hoima district field officer was arrested and detained in Hoima district. She was arrested alongside our partners under the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC). She was released without any charge. Two of our SBFC partners were released on police bond and have never been charged in courts of law todate.

In addition, on May 25, 2021, AFIEGO’s Buliisa district field officer was arrested alongside an Italian journalist, Federica Marsi in Buliisa. Ms. Marsi was released without charge while AFIEGO’s Buliisa district field officer was detained for two nights in Buliisa and Hoima. He was released on police bond with a holding charge of holding an unlawful assembly. He was arrested while engaging with the Italian journalist, and had not held any unlawful assemblies.

Todate, our officer has not been charged in courts of law.

Despite the atmosphere of intimidation in which the CSOs operate, we continue to play our role because it is integral in protecting all Ugandans and our environmental resources.

NEXT STEPS

AFIEGO is calling on the public to work with CSOs to engage government and use all the available legal options to end the intimidation of CSOs and the hostile civic space in which CSOs operate.

AFIEGO will continue to legally operate.

ENDS

Signatories

- Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)
- Guild Presidents' Forum on Governance (GPFOG)
- Citizens Concern Africa (CICOA)
- Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA)
- South Western Institute for Policy and Advocacy (SOWIPA)
- World Voices Uganda (WVU)
- Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG)
- Youth for Green Communities (YGC)
- Twimukye Womens Organisation
- Graffen Organisation –Butimba
- Center for Energy Governance
- African Initiative on Food security and Environment
- Environmental Governance Institute (EGI)

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