

Journalists are being targeted by security forces while on duty.

BY FRANKLIN DRAKU & DAVID WALUGEMBE

As Uganda enters the final stretch toward the 2026 General Election, the relationship between security forces and the media has sharply deteriorated, raising serious concerns about press freedom and public accountability.

Journalists, especially those covering Opposition campaigns, particularly those trailing National Unity Platform (NUP) presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, alias Bobi Wine, are being targeted by security forces. A number of them report being constantly intimidated by the security forces to stop giving publicity to Mr Kyagulanyi.

On Monday, Mr Ivan Mbadhi, a Buganda Broadcasting Services (BBS) TV journalist, was brutally assaulted by security personnel while on duty in Kween District, drawing sharp condemnation locally and globally, on the need for freedom of the press.

Mr Mbadhi, who appeared to be weak yesterday, with a bandage tied around his neck for support, said he was targeted because of filming security officers spraying teargas in the journalist's car.

He said after officers realised that he was filming them, they turned their anger to him, boxed him, banged his head on the car, squeezed his throat, ribs, and brutalised him for about two minutes, until a commander ordered them to leave him.

"I don't know whether that's how police were told to handle journalists on duty," he recounted.

Mr Mbadhi, who was receiving treatment in Kapchorwa yesterday, said he was feeling a headache, throat pain, and general bodily pains.

# Security forces on the spot over brutality on journalists



Supporters of Opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi, with local and foreign journalists, are assaulted by police outside the UN Human Rights offices on February 17, 2021. PHOTO/FILE

The latest assault by the security forces has drawn wide condemnation from different groups, including journalist groups, human rights activists, and the general population, who demand that journalists be allowed to do their work without interference by security forces.

"We condemn the brutal beating of BBS TV journalist Ivan Mbadhi by the Uganda Police Force while covering Bobi Wine. Police must respect press freedom and protect journalists on duty, not to attack them," a statement issued

by the Human Rights Network for Journalists (HRNJ) Uganda, said.

Mr Robert Sempala, the Executive Director of HRNJ-Uganda, called the attack "deeply troubling" and warned that security forces must not act above the law.

"It is unfortunate to see security personnel, whose primary duty is to protect citizens' rights, including those of journalists, turning against them while they are performing their professional duties," Mr Robert Sempala, Executive Director, HRNJ-Uganda.

The Uganda Journalists Association (UJA), also condemned the brutality meted out against Mr Mbadhi and said the association has embarked on a legal

process to compel the security forces to respect the rights of journalists.

Mr Emmanuel Kirunda, the UJA secretary general, told this publication that they will not rest until the perpetrators of the violence are brought to book.

Mr Kirunda condemned the security officers for constantly interfering with journalists on duty, as it contradicts Articles 29(1) (a) and 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), which emphasises press freedom and access to information.

"We wish to remind security personnel that journalists have a constitutional duty to inform citizens about decisions that affect their lives and their country. Any move to restrict them from accessing public information is a step backwards in Uganda's democratic journey," he said.

He urged security personnel to respect the journalists' profession ahead of polls next week and said any attempt to curtail their freedom to work is a move to silence independent journalism and shield security forces' acts from public accountability, hence undermining the principles of democracy and good governance.

Mr Frank Kabuye, the UJA spokesperson, said since the campaigns started last year, they have received numerous complaints from journalists attacked by security personnel.

Mr Kabuye said unfortunately, journalists are attacked not only by security personnel, but civilians as well.

He said Mr Bob Oyuku Ojok, a journalist with *Unity FM* Lango, was allegedly attacked by supporters of one of the political parties on November 20, 2025, at Boke, Lira City, Lango Sub-region.