

For Immediate Release

SMUG VICTORY OVER PERSECUTION BY ANTI-HUMAN RIGHTS FORCES IN UGANDA: ACQUITTAL OF DSB AND HN IN CRIMINAL CASE NUMBER 2518 OF 2022.

Date: March 20, 2025 - Kampala, Uganda.

We are relieved and overjoyed to share that the legal battle has come to an end, and justice has prevailed! *"I'm so relieved and grateful to God almighty that the truth has finally come to light. This acquittal is a testament and a reminder that justice can prevail, even in the face of adversity,"* exclaimed DSB, one of the acquitted parties and then staff of SMUG.

On May 19, 2022, following an attack and malicious destruction of property at SMUG, two colleagues went to Ntinda Police Station in Kampala to report the incident. Rather than receiving the protection and justice they sought, they were unjustly arrested, coerced into making statements, and detained on fabricated assault charges brought by the very perpetrator of the crime, Elisha Mukisa, a self-proclaimed "ex-gay" crusader and product of anti-rights, anti-gender, and anti-LGBTQ+ groups in Uganda. This was followed by the public halting of the operations of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) by the NGO Bureau on 3rd August 2022.

Dr. Frank Mugisha, welcomed the verdict, noting, *"This case is a clear example of how Uganda's hostile legal and political environment is weaponized against LGBTQ+ individuals. The fingerprints of anti-rights and anti-LGBTQ+ groups are all over this injustice where victims seeking protection are instead criminalized."*

For nearly three years, we have endured a prolonged legal battle, exemplifying the systemic injustices faced by LGBTQ+ activists and human rights defenders. *"This case dragged on with baseless prosecution, multiple adjournments, and no real trial. Police must end arrests based on suspicion and hearsay. I hope those vindicated find healing from this ordeal,"* stated Mr. Douglas Mawadri, an advocate in the case.

"Litigating against hate and acceptance of SOGIESC issues will take longer, but we will win eventually. After representing our clients in court over thirty times, today the court agreed with our submissions, ruling that our clients had no case to answer, thereby acquitting them from criminal prosecution," said Fridah Mutesi, an advocate from Ubuntu Law and Justice Centre - UBUNTU.

While we acknowledge this legal victory, we remain concerned about the broader climate of persecution and criminalization facing LGBTQ+ individuals and organizations in Uganda. This case serves as a stark reminder that advocating for LGBTQ+ rights in Uganda remains a high-risk endeavor. The continued targeting of our community through misinformation, fabricated charges, arbitrary arrests, and legal harassment is an attempt to silence us.

"Let this victory be a symbol of our resistance, resilience, and hope," added Dr. Frank Mugisha.

We extend our gratitude to our legal team, partners, and the broader LGBTQ+ community for their unwavering support throughout this ordeal. Together, we will continue to challenge injustice and work towards a future free from discrimination and persecution. While this chapter has closed, our fight for equality and justice continues. ALUTA CONTINUA!!

SMUG is a movement dedicated to raising awareness and protecting Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer (LGBTIQ) persons and communities in Uganda from stigma, discrimination, abuse, violence, and repression based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

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