

Ugandan commentator arrested over Facebook post critical of president

On July 12, 2019, plainclothes police in Kireka, a suburb of Kampala, Uganda's capital, arrested Joseph Kabuleta, a local minister and former reporter who regularly posts political commentary on social media, for allegedly posting "offensive communication against the person of the President" online, according to a July 12 police statement reviewed by CPJ and Fred Enanga, a Ugandan police spokesperson, and Daniel M. Walyemera, Kabuleta's lawyer, who both spoke with CPJ via phone.



Ugandan police officers are seen in Kampala on April 23, 2019. Police recently arrested Joseph Kabuleta for allegedly posting "offensive communication against the person of the President" online. Credit: CPJ/AFP/Isaac Kasamani.

Police held Kabuleta at the Special Investigations Division offices in Kireka until July 16, when he was released on the condition that he return to those offices to check in on July 18, according to Walyemera. Enanga told CPJ that Kabuleta's case is being reviewed by the director of public prosecutions to determine if charges will be filed.

The Ugandan police statement cited a July 8 [Facebook post](#) by Kabuleta criticising Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni as the reason for his arrest, and said police will "continue using the acquired capabilities to monitor comments on social media."

The police statement alleged that the post was a criminal violation of Section 25 of Uganda's [2011 Computer Misuse Act](#), which pertains to "[a]ny person who willfully and repeatedly uses electronic communication to disturb or attempts to disturb the peace, quiet or right of privacy of any person with no purpose of legitimate communication."

If charged and found guilty, Kabuleta could face a fine of 480,000 Ugandan shillings (\$130), up to one year in prison, or both, according to the act and [CPJ reporting](#) on previous similar cases.

Matsiko Godwin Muhwezi, a local lawyer, was also arrested on July 12 for photographing the car used to arrest Kabuleta and sharing the image on WhatsApp, Walyemera told CPJ. He was released on July 14 but was required to check in at the Special Investigations Division on July 15 and has been told to return on July 22, Walyemera said.

In June, Ugandan police also arrested Pidson Kareire, managing editor of privately owned news website *The Drone Media*, and charged him with four counts of criminal libel and four counts of "offensive communication" under the Computer Misuse Act, as [CPJ reported](#) at the time.

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