



Press Release

23 February 2006

Power belongs to the people, but not in Uganda

Few people know vote is happening, and many who do are too scared to vote

JOSEPHINE OSIKENA, Director of Democracy and Development at the Foreign Policy Centre, today said:

“The wave of Ugandan elections will be anything but free and fair. Why should they be? Regrettably, President Yoweri Museveni appears to have lost all respect for the ballot box and, for the most part, the election results have been predetermined. Voters have either been scared off by violence and intimidation or they have become completely apathetic.

“A recent survey of Ugandan voters (1) shows that only 53% of respondents know that presidential elections are taking place today (23rd February). Only 33% of respondents know that legislative elections are taking place on the same day and a mere 11% are aware of local elections due to take place on 28th February.

“Moreover, the Ugandan Electoral Commission, lead by Badru Kiggundu appeared to have only recently – just 4 days before the election - embarked on any outreach work to inform voters about the election.

“Power belongs to the people, but not in Uganda. Few people know that there is a democratic process happening in Uganda, and many that do are too scared to vote.”

STEPHEN TWIGG, former Minister and Director of the Foreign Policy Centre said:

“Today’s elections in Uganda, the first multi-party vote since President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986, will be a telling indication of the state of democracy in Africa today. *Museveni must not doctor the election results, and accept the final count if his former physician, Kizza Besigye, the opposition leader, wins the election.*

“The personal is most definitely political in Uganda, with Dr Besigye’s wife, Winnie Byanyima MP being a former associate and friend of President Museveni. However, the introduction of a party, rather than individual, system shows a promising move away from Uganda’s outdated one-party state.”

ENDS



Editor's Notes

1. An International Republican Institute (IRI) survey, conducted in Uganda from January 20 through 24, 2006, found that only 53 percent of Ugandans know the presidential election will be held on February 23, and only 33 percent are aware that parliamentary elections will be held on the same date. Only 11 percent knew local council elections are scheduled for February 28, 2006. Furthermore, an overwhelming 79 percent of those sampled believe a voters' card is required for voting when Ugandan election law stipulates that no voter card is necessary in order to cast a ballot. A significant majority of 57 percent believe that their photograph needs to appear on the voters' register for them to vote, though this not actually a legal requirement.

<http://www.iri.org/02-09-06-UgandaPoll.asp>