

# Inter-Religious Council of Uganda



## PRESS RELEASE

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### INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA CALLS FOR PEACEFUL AND INCLUSIVE ELECTIONS

Greetings from the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) in the name of God, the Most Gracious and Merciful, Creator of the Universe and all within it.

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) has observed with concern a growing trend among certain voices, both within faith communities and in the wider public, to make partisan pronouncements in the lead-up to the 2026 elections. While every citizen enjoys the right to vote and to express an opinion, IRCU emphasizes that when public voices urge support for particular candidates or parties on religious or identity grounds, they risk dividing communities, weakening national cohesion, and undermining the credibility of our democracy.

Sectarianism has no place in Uganda's future. As faith leaders united under IRCU, we affirm that our pulpits, mosques, and temples must be sanctuaries of unity, justice, and peaceful coexistence. History shows that whenever religion is politicized, peace is endangered and communities suffer. We call on all leaders and citizens to use their influence wisely, speaking words that heal the nation and strengthen its bonds.

As the umbrella body bringing together Uganda's faith traditions, IRCU reaffirms its non-partisan mandate. In Proverbs 11:14 the Bible says: *"For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisors make*

*victory sure."* Our role as faith leaders is to provide moral guidance, foster unity, and safeguard the dignity of all Ugandans regardless of religious, ethnic and political affiliation. We issue this statement to reiterate our position, to caution against politicization of the pulpit, and to call all actors to uphold peace, integrity, and inclusiveness throughout the electoral process.

### **Why this statement matters now**

Elections are moments of heightened competition, but they must never become a license for identity conflict. Uganda has witnessed in its history how religion, ethnicity, or region can be manipulated to divide citizens and fuel violence. The tragic religious wars of the late 19th century remind us that when identity is weaponized, communities are torn apart and national cohesion suffers for generations.

Today, Uganda is home to a young and vibrant population. Studies show that 97 percent of Ugandans belong to one faith community or another. This gives faith leaders extraordinary influence, influence that must be exercised responsibly. When faith leaders align with partisan interests, the credibility of the church, mosque, or temple is compromised and followers are left divided. When faith leaders stand above the fray, they build bridges, calm tensions, and inspire hope.

It is for this reason that IRCU, in consultation with its leadership and structures on peace and governance, has chosen to speak clearly: ***partisan statements from our faith institutions and clerics are not IRCU's position, and IRCU remains committed to neutrality and peace.***

### **Faith and identity in elections**

The power of faith in Uganda cannot be overstated. Faith leaders preside over life's most sacred moments, shape moral teaching, and



command platforms that reach millions each week. In the electoral season, words spoken from the pulpit or altar carry immense weight.

When those words are used to inflame suspicion, ridicule political opponents, or urge congregants to vote on the basis of religion or tribe, they risk pulling the fabric of the nation apart. Identity politics thrives on the logic of “us versus them.” In elections, this logic can quickly escalate into fear, hostility, and even violence.

As the Holy Qur’an reminds us: *“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you”* (Qur’an 49:13). Difference is meant to enrich our common life, not to divide us.

### **IRCU’s institutional record**

This call is not new. For more than two decades, the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) has worked to prevent violence and strengthen democratic governance in Uganda. Through initiatives such as the National Dialogue Process, which emphasized identity consensus, the Elders Forum of Uganda at both national and regional levels, and the National Task Force on Electoral Violence, IRCU has brought together political, cultural, and civic leaders across divides. We have continued to mediate during periods of tension, monitor incidents of electoral violence, facilitate dialogue between electoral authorities and citizens, and deploy observers to electoral hotspots.

During the 2016 electoral cycle, IRCU convened a presidential debate that became a landmark moment for national cohesion. It was not only an interfaith achievement, bringing together leaders from across Uganda’s religious traditions, but also a civic milestone. For the first time, presidential candidates with diverse manifestos stood side by side, and citizens with differing political loyalties sat together to listen and engage peacefully. That debate showed that identity need not

divide us; it can coexist within a shared commitment to the common good.

This record demonstrates that IRCU does not only speak about peace, it invests in practical mechanisms to make it real. That is why today's clarification is urgent. The interfaith platform we have built for unity cannot be compromised by partisan voices. Our role is to safeguard it for all Ugandans, regardless of creed or political choice.

### **Our Message to Stakeholders**

**To fellow religious leaders:** We urge all religious leaders to resist the temptation to align their pulpits with political campaigns. Teach civic responsibility, encourage lawful participation, and remind your congregants that their vote is their voice. But do not instruct them on who to choose.

IRCU insists that faith must never be turned into a weapon of division. Our sacred texts speak with one voice: to uphold justice, to show mercy, to walk in truth, and to seek peace. The Bible teaches, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God"* (Matthew 5:9). At a time when political competition tempts us toward division, these words remind us that true leadership is measured by peace.

**To the Electoral Commission:** The primary responsibility for managing the electoral process lies with the Electoral Commission. For the outcome to be credible and acceptable, the Commission must be impartial and transparent — and must be seen to be so. The Commission should take all necessary steps to shield itself from manipulation by individuals or political groups. We call on the Commission, its staff and machinery, and to ensure every eligible voter can exercise their constitutional right to cast a vote freely and peacefully.



**To political parties and candidates:** Compete on ideas, not identities. Put Uganda before party interests. Speak words that heal rather than harm. As Proverbs 15:1 reminds us, *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

The recent tense intra-party primaries revealed serious gaps in preparation and grievance management. The surge in independents, manipulation of results, intimidation, and destruction of property are troubling signs. We call on all parties and candidates to abandon these unlawful practices, embrace healthy competition, and uphold the rule of law.

**To security agencies:** Protect all citizens equally. Act with professionalism and restraint. The trust of the people depends on your impartiality.

**To the media:** Report responsibly. Verify facts. Give balanced coverage. Resist the allure of sensationalism that fuels division. Provide space for constructive voices that emphasize peace and accountability.

**To Development Partners:** Thank you for your continued support. We invite you to stand with Uganda during this defining chapter of our democratic journey.

**To voters and social media users:** Participate fully, and peacefully. Do not be swayed by appeals to fear, religion, or tribe. Exercise your right with dignity, and respect your neighbor's right to choose differently. Regarding social media, you have freedom of speech and expression but use it to promote peace, tolerance, and constructive dialogue. Let social media serve civic engagement, not misinformation or abusing those who hold different opinions.

## **The way forward**

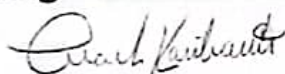
IRCU will continue to mobilize its structures nationwide, including district interfaith coordination committees, and peace monitors, to ensure early detection of tensions and swift engagement with communities. IRCU will also track both the conduct of stakeholders and the commitments made under the 2024 Peace Pledge. We will issue regular reports, convene dialogue, and work with partners to strengthen accountability and trust.

Our prayer is that the 2026 elections mark a turning point: a demonstration that Ugandans can disagree without division, compete without hatred, and choose leaders without violence.

## **Conclusion**

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda speaks today with one voice. We reaffirm our neutrality. We condemn partisan statements. We commit to peace, unity, and dignity for all. We call on every Ugandan to join us in rejecting identity-based division and embracing the vision of a nation that is stronger together.

**Msgr. Charles Kasibante,**



Chairperson IRCU Board

**FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE INTE-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF  
UGANDA**