

Inter-Religious Council of Uganda



Religions for Peace

PASTORAL LETTER TO THE CITIZENS OF UGANDA IN VIEW OF THE FORTH-COMING ELECTIONS

*“Blessed are peace makers, for they shall be called children of God” **Mathew 5:9***

*“The servants of the highest are those who walk upon the earth humbly, and when the ignorant address them harshly, they say words of peace” **Quran 25:63***

Greetings from the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda in the name of Almighty God, the source of all peace, justice, and hope for our nation.

In a few days, our country will go to the polls. The journey to this point has not been easy. It has been generally peaceful with some instances of violence and loss of lives and the suffering of some of our people. We are therefore deeply grateful to God for preserving our nation and bringing us to this moment. We extend our heartfelt sympathy and prayers to all families that have been affected, whether through the loss of loved ones, injury, or destruction of property.

During our pastoral visits across the country, we have observed a heightened sense of anxiety among the population, particularly

regarding the escalating animosity between candidates seeking various leadership positions and their supporters. This anxiety is further compounded by the destabilizing effects that elections have had in some of our neighbouring countries, as well as by our own history, when disputed elections led to insurgencies for which Uganda paid a heavy price in human life and loss of property.

As religious leaders, we recognize our sacred duty to promote peace. At the same time, we firmly affirm that any process in which our nation engages must be grounded in justice and fairness. Without these, we risk sowing seeds of resentment, violence, and disorder. Guided by this conviction, we have undertaken various initiatives to contribute to a peaceful, credible, and transparent electoral environment, which include:

1. Persistently calling for responsible conduct and unwavering respect for the Constitution by all stakeholders, and using our centers of worship as spaces for civic awareness, voter education, and moral guidance.
2. Engaging key duty-bearers and decision-makers, including His Excellency the President, the Electoral Commission, political party leaders, security agencies, and the media, to raise pertinent concerns and advocate for an environment that upholds human dignity and guarantees a credible, peaceful, and violence-free electoral process.
3. Organizing and promoting various platforms of prayer and intercession, continually placing the entire electoral process before the throne of God. We have encouraged regular prayers

in our worship centers, in keeping with our sacred scriptures, which call upon us to pray without ceasing.

We are writing this Pastoral Guide to remind one another of our responsibilities at such a crucial time in the life of our nation. Elections are not only about casting a ballot. They are sacred moments in which a people pauses to examine its conscience, to reflect on the state of the country, and to decide the kind of future they desire for themselves and for their children. Every national election presents Ugandans with an opportunity to ask: What have we done well and must now consolidate, protect, and strengthen? What has harmed our social fabric and must be corrected or changed? Which men and women can we trust to lead us in building a just, peaceful, and prosperous Uganda? Nation building has never depended on one person or one political party. It is always a collective effort that requires the participation, sacrifice, and goodwill of all citizens and institutions.

At the same time, as religious leaders we are conscious that elections have their limits. They are an important mechanism for choosing leaders, but they are not a one-size-fits-all solution for the deeper conflicts, grievances, and divisions in our society. Our country carries wounds that are political, ethnic, religious, regional, economic, and generational. Many of these divisions are rooted in history and in structural injustice that cannot be fully addressed at the ballot box alone. This is why we continue to believe in, and wish to revive, the spirit of the National Dialogue process. Through genuine national dialogue, Ugandans from

different backgrounds can confront painful truths, listen to one another, seek understanding, and agree on reforms that elections by themselves cannot deliver. Elections can open or close windows of opportunity, but it is sustained dialogue, reconciliation, and deliberate reform that will secure long term peace and stability.

Notwithstanding, an election is a serious and solemn exercise. In effect, we are choosing the kind of society we want to live in and the heritage we wish to hand over to the next generation. We therefore implore all citizens, as the primary stakeholders in this process, to be prayerful, sober, and mindful of the far-reaching implications of their choices. Let each voter weigh their decision not only in light of personal interest, but also in light of the common good, national unity, and the dignity of every Ugandan.

We also wish to underscore the grave responsibility carried by other stakeholders in this period. We have in mind the Electoral Commission, candidates at all levels, political parties, the media, security agencies, Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary. Their choices and actions must be guided by the National Constitution and by the higher call to serve the people of Uganda in truth and fairness. In what they say, in what they permit, and in what they refuse to do, they should act in the broad interest of the country, protecting life, respecting human rights, and preserving the possibility of future national dialogue and reconciliation beyond the elections.

The coming elections are about more than individuals or parties. They concern the very soul of our country, its image, and its well-being. Those who seek leadership at any level must demonstrate a clear commitment to safeguarding the dignity of Uganda by creating an environment in which every citizen can thrive, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation. Our sacred scriptures remind us that leadership is a privilege entrusted by God and the people, not a personal entitlement. David was chosen to be king of Israel instead of his outwardly impressive elder brother Eliab (1 Samuel 16:1–11), reminding us that God and history judge leaders by the integrity of their hearts, not by their stature or self-promotion.

We therefore appeal to all aspiring leaders to embrace a spirit of humility and sacrificial service, preparing themselves to place the welfare of all Ugandans above personal ambition and partisan gain. At the same time, we call upon voters to sincerely seek God's wisdom so that they are not swayed only by appearances, gifts, or loud promises, but grow more discerning in evaluating character, competence, integrity, and genuine commitment to the common good.

1. THE ROLE OF KEY INSTITUTIONS IN THE COMING DAYS

Elections demand that key institutions fulfil their constitutional mandate with a clear conscience and a deep sense of accountability to the citizens they serve. When institutions that are entrusted with safeguarding the common good place partisan interests above national welfare, they do not only fail the electoral

process, they fail the entire nation. The tragic events we have witnessed in some neighbouring countries remind us of the grave consequences that follow when institutions abdicate their responsibilities or act in a biased manner.

We therefore call upon the Electoral Commission, security agencies, political parties, Parliament, the Executive, and the Judiciary to adhere strictly to their constitutional roles and to exercise their responsibilities in the spirit of our national motto: “For God and My Country.” At this critical hour, Uganda needs institutions that are impartial, courageous, transparent, and firmly committed to protecting life, upholding human rights, and preserving peace.

2. THE ROLE OF THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

The electoral processes in several Member States of the East African Community have, in the past, been marred by violence and instability. In some cases, elections have reversed hard won developmental gains, led to the loss of life, and triggered large-scale displacement that has placed a heavy burden on neighboring countries. These experiences clearly show that elections in one country are never a purely internal matter. Their outcome can strengthen or weaken the stability, security, and prosperity of the entire region.

As Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, we firmly believe that the East African Community has a moral and political responsibility to promote conditions for credible, free, and fair elections in the region. This responsibility includes more than observing elections

on polling day. It calls for proactive engagement before, during, and after elections, encouraging dialogue, supporting preventive diplomacy, and insisting on respect for constitutionalism and the rule of law.

We therefore appeal to the leadership and organs of the East African Community to engage constructively with the key actors in Uganda's electoral process. This includes encouraging restraint in their public statements, supporting meaningful dialogue among political actors, and standing firmly against any actions that may incite violence or undermine the will of the people. We urge the East African Community to use its good offices, experience, and regional mechanisms to help forestall destabilizing outcomes and to support Uganda in conducting elections that strengthen, rather than threaten, the peace and unity of our region.

3. THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Electoral processes often mirror the depth and quality of investment that Development Partners have made in the democratic life of a country. Where this engagement is sustained, principled, and people centered, elections are more likely to contribute to lasting peace, accountable governance, and respect for human dignity. Where it is weak or inconsistent, the space for manipulation, abuse of power, and violations of rights tends to widen.

How Development Partners engage in Uganda at this time is therefore important for promoting a genuine democratic culture. Such a culture goes far beyond the act of voting. It includes the

promotion of human rights, the strengthening of an independent justice system, and better systems of accountability. A good democracy is also sustained by long term support for civic education, professional and accountable security institutions, and independent institutions that can check abuses of power.

Our sacred scriptures remind us that God requires of us to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before Him (Micah 6:8). They call us to defend the cause of the poor and the vulnerable and to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. As the Surah An-Nisa 4:135 says “O you who believe, stand firmly for justice, as witnesses for Allah, even if it is against yourselves, or your parents and relatives.” When Development Partners invest in systems that protect the weak, restrain the abuse of power, and promote justice, they participate in this sacred work of upholding the image of God in every person. We therefore appeal to the Development Partners in Uganda to sustain and deepen their principled engagement at this critical moment. We urge them to use their diplomatic voice, technical support, and resources in ways that encourage transparency, fairness, and restraint by all actors, and that deter actions which could undermine the credibility of the electoral process.

MANAGING THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS

The outcome of electoral processes in Africa is often contentious. As a country, we have an appalling precedent of addressing, especially, contested electoral outcomes. It is our considered opinion that as a country, we should reflect a sense of maturity by

learning from our previous mistakes, especially given the crippling impact the military option has had on the people and our development during the five years of the guerrilla war.

The effects of even a mismanaged electoral process can be minimized by those who are declared winners adopting a reconciliatory approach, that is, by embracing those across the political divide and harnessing their skills for the development of the country. While the current political culture lends itself to “the winner takes it all,” we would like to appeal that this should change. As a developing country with limited human resource, we cannot afford to dump those with the valuable skills just because they belong to a different political party or have lost an election.

This approach will contribute to the healing, which the country desperately needs after an election and will certainly contribute to stability and accelerated development.

We, therefore, appeal to all our aspiring leaders to appreciate that it is a sign of political maturity to be magnanimous and to take seriously Archbishop Tutu’s counsel, “... If we are truly interested in peace and stability, we don’t talk to our friends but to our enemies (perceived or actual).” We also plead with the citizens to refrain from acts of provocation, intimidation or revenge but appreciate that we can’t wish each other way, Uganda is our motherland in which we must all realize our aspirations.”

CONCLUSION

Fellow citizens, we trust that you realize the weight that we are placing on the coming elections. This is mainly because of the concerns and fears that you have expressed to us, and the feeling that these elections might mark a watershed in our political journey.

We, therefore, appeal to every citizen and all key Institutions to make responsible choices that will lead to credible, peaceful, free and fair elections thereby saving ourselves from a possible catastrophe.

FOR GOD AND OUR COUNTRY!

Signed this 7th day of January, 2026 for and on behalf of the faith fraternity in Uganda.

NO	NAME AND DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
1.	The Most Rev. Dr. Stephen Samuel Kaziimba Mugalu, Archbishop, Province of the Church of Uganda, Chair, Council of Presidents	
2.	His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Shaban Ramadhan Mubaje, Grand Mufti of Uganda, Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
3.	Rt. Rev. Joseph Antony Zziwa Bishop Kiyinda-Mityana Diocese Chairman Uganda Episcopal Conference Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
4.	His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos Muzeeyi Archbishop Uganda Orthodox Church Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	

5.	Pr. Samuel Kajoba, Archbishop Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda, Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
6.	Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda Presiding Apostle Born-Again Faith in Uganda Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
7.	Bishop Joshua Lwere General Overseer, Association of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches in Uganda, Co-Chairperson, Council of Presidents	
8.	Msgr. Charles Kasibante Vicar General (<i>Emeritus</i>) Archdiocese of Kampala Chairperson Inter-Religious Council of Uganda Board	
9.	Joshua Kitakule Secretary General, Inter-Religious Council of Uganda/Council Secretary	