



**IRCU ABRIDGED GENERAL MEMORANDUM TO PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA  
ON PROTECTION OF SOVEREIGNTY BILL, 2026**

**PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA COMMITTEES ON INTERNAL  
AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE, LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE**

**APRIL, 2026**

## 1.0 SALUTATION

The Honourable Chairperson and Members of the Joint Committee for Internal Affairs and Defense, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

On my own behalf and on behalf of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, we are delighted to appear before this Committee to submit our views on the Protection of the Sovereignty Bill.

Honourable Chairperson and Members, it is our prophetic call as religious leaders to guide the nation and be a voice for the voiceless. We thus, present our opinion in respect to this Bill in this spirit.

Honorable Chairperson allow me introduce the senior religious leaders and lawyers who are in attendance and in solidarity with the IRCU in presenting this opinion. *(Refer to attached List of Participants from the IRCU).*

Honourable Chairperson the IRCU commiserates with Parliament for the loss of **Hon. Hellen Nakimuli, Kalangala Women MP**. May the Lord grant her eternal rest.

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Honourable Chairperson and Members, the IRCU has consulted with its Inter-Faith Lawyers, the clergy, the laity and partners including the Muslim Center for Law and Justice, the Uganda Catholic Lawyers' Association, the Uganda Christian Lawyers' Fraternity and the Uganda Muslim Lawyers' Association in developing this opinion both *(Abridged and detailed versions shared)*.

The IRCU notes that Bill in issue follows last year's amendment of the second schedule of the Anti-Money Laundering Act that excluded religious and faith Institutions from the list of accountable Persons, thereby relieving them from the burden of reporting to the Financial Regulatory Authority. The Bill however signals a reversal of that trend, seeking to impose more, not less, scrutiny on organizations and Religious Institutions.

Honourable Chairperson and Members, it our considered opinion that this legislation will undeniably have a profound impact on the operations and funding for faith and religious Institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations and individuals in Uganda because of the following reasons.

1. **Sovereignty of the People:** While the Bill purports to protect the Sovereignty of the People of Uganda, in reading its contents, the Bill usurps the sovereignty of the people and attempts to vest it in the government of Uganda in violation of Article 1 of the 1995 Constitution that provides that

All power belongs to the people who shall exercise their sovereignty in accordance with this Constitution.

2. **Registration Requirement under Clause 14;** IRCU Opines that:

- I. The Bill gives the Minister of Internal Affairs unchecked powers to revoke or suspend any registration on grounds that the activities of the agents of foreigners are disruptive in nature, pose a security threat and are no longer fit for purpose, without any due process or hearing.
- II. The Clause also imposes an extra burden on Civic, Religious and Faith-based Institutions requiring another unnecessary mode of registration, which may be burdensome and bureaucratic since organizations are already required to register with KCCA, URSB, FIA, NGO Bureau, Law Council, URA, NSSF, Interpol, etc.
- III. Furthermore, because the definition of an agent of a foreigner in Clause 1 is broad, this registration requirement may apply to a very wide range of lawful institutions and individuals, thereby creating stigma, surveillance risk, and operational uncertainty.
- IV. Additionally, the registration requirements may lead to operational bottlenecks in the operation of NGOs and private dealings due to the lack of defined timelines in Ministerial Approvals.

3. **Restrictions on Foreign Funding and foreign influence with hefty penalties:**  
The IRCU observes that;

- I. The penalties proposed are excessive and will tantamount to the gross violation of individual and organizational rights, since they do not align to the Constitutional sentencing Standards and do not conform to basic principles of proportionality of penalty.
- II. Similarly, the prescribed punishments, positions the different offences specified under the Bill as capital offences.
- III. The fines and penalties set may be used to stifle the lawful activities of NGOs, individuals, Religious and Faith Institutions in descent of unconstitutional government policies or practices.

4. **The Offence of Economic Sabotage under Clause 13.** The IRCU observes;

- I. This Clause may potentially conflict with **Article 29 of the 1995 Constitution** of Uganda, which provides for Rubric Rights including freedom of association and expression.

- II. The Clause risks being misinterpreted by the Regulators, since its overly broad and ambiguous, and may potentially be used by Government to curtail ordinary business transactions, Freedom of speech and expression.
- III. The offence may also be used to criminalize free speech, including analyst reports, investor briefings, media commentary, research, whistleblowing, or professional opinions on economic risks.
- IV. It may also discourage truthful communication about vulnerabilities in the economy and Government.

5. **Fundamental Rights:** Referring to the Application of the Bill (Clause 2), its interpretive (Clause 1) and activities listed as restricted or described as disruptive by the Bill. The IRCU opinions that the restrictions may breach the Bill of Rights under **Chapter Four of the 1995 Constitution** by criminalizing the freedom to assemble and to demonstrate together with others peacefully and unarmed and to petition government against any cause as provided for under **Article 29 (1) (d)** of the 1995 Constitution, cripple free political participation and funding of Political Parties, guaranteed under **Article 29 (1) (e) of the 1995**, among other violations.

6. **Powers of the Minister and respective agents including** the Power to revoke or deny Certificates, declare a person or an organization an agent of a foreigner without an impartial due process, and the right to entry into premises for investigations. The IRCU observes;

- I. That the Privacy of individuals, religious institutions and organizations as provided for under **Article 27 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda**, may be potentially abused by these unchecked powers, and yet there are no proposed sufficient alternative dispute resolution mechanisms proposed in the Bill.
- II. Furthermore, this legislation conflicts with existing laws like the Data Protection Act, Anti-Money Laundering Act, and Public Finance Management Act by mandating public disclosure of sensitive data and duplicating offences with harsher penalties and fewer safeguards.

7. **Designation of Citizens as Foreigners:** A foreigner is defined as a citizen of Uganda residing in another country. The IRCU observes as follows.

- I. The designation of a nonresident citizen of Uganda as a foreigner is derogatory in nature and conflicts with the constitutional guarantees for citizenship under **Chapter Three of the 1995 Constitution**. A Ugandan Citizen

cannot be categorized as a foreigner. One cannot simultaneously be a Citizen and then rendered a foreigner at will by law.

- II. The categorization of Ugandan citizens residing abroad as foreigners will stifle the channeling remittances from labour externalization and limit foreign Funding to the detriment of the country's taxable base.
- III. Additionally, being deemed or designated as an agent of foreigners by the Minister of Internal Affairs without any due process is derogatory in nature and a gross violation of rights of citizenship.

8. **Policy Engagements:** Part II of the Bill intends to prohibit a wide range of activities under the guise of protecting sovereignty. The IRCU observes as follows:

- I. These restrictions may stifle advocacy, civic and voter education, restrain election monitoring, policy engagements that call for accountability from Government, and economic reporting. This may also shatter the prophetic role of religious leaders as they will not be expected to comment on Political, Electoral or governance issues of any Kind.
- II. The Bill may potentially limit investments by the Religious, Faith and Non-Government Organizations in key priority areas including Education, Health, Agriculture among others by requiring a special permission to engage in them, yet private institutions like religious institutions are partners of government in the social economic transformation of the country.

9. **Restrictions on Funding under Clause 22,** the IRCU opines that;

- I. This is one of the most consequential provisions. It may affect churches, NGOs, schools, humanitarian bodies, private businesses, development programs, and diaspora-supported initiatives. It may also slow investment, remittances, and legitimate international support.
- II. This clause may further give government an opportunity to control, monitor and or take income of the religious institutions which amounts to government interfering into the affairs of religious institutions and other entities.
- III. Furthermore, the Clause may violate the right to operational independence of individuals, private entities, religious institutions and NGOs due to the possibilities of operational bottlenecks.

10. **Declaration of Sources of Funding/Reporting under Clause 21,** the IRCU opines that

- I. These clauses may give government a far-reaching right to interfere with internal/private matters of individuals and organizations including their funding.
- II. The Clause creates recurring compliance obligations backed by criminal sanctions, increasing administrative burden for organizations and exposing them to enforcement risk for technical non-compliance.
- III. The provisions risk to violate the Privacy of institutions and disrupt normal Business operations and transactions;
- IV. In addition, the information required here is already required by other Government Agencies.
- V. This overlaps with existing anti-money laundering, Know Your Client standards in Financial Management, and source-of-funds obligations. It also raises confidentiality concerns, especially where declarations may be accessible on payment of a fee.

## **1.2 IRCU GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO PARLIAMENT**

It is our considered opinion that Parliament should deliberate on the following recommendations before passing the Bill.

1. The Parliament should revise vague and overly broad to ensure they are narrow and precise, specific definitions like the meaning of a foreign agent, a foreigner, interests of a foreigner, public interest and economic sabotage need to be carefully reconsidered.
2. The Parliament should limit excessive and unrealistic Ministerial Powers of the Minister under the Bill, specifically the discretion to register or deregister organizations and approve funding without independent oversight. There should be clear established Fair hearing and appeal safeguards within the Bill to check the Powers of the Minister and the Respective department for Peace and Security.
3. Parliament should strike down provisions that are criminalizing lawful fundraising activities by Ugandans living abroad and those that may affect remittances in support of local investments and families as it is likely to affect the social economic progress of the country and partnerships in development.
4. Parliament should put in place mechanisms to enable Ministerial Coordination in implementing the Bill, strengthen or establish a central registry for information already shared among government agencies, since the information that is required in the registration processes is readily available to the NGO Bureau, URSB, Banks, Financial Intelligence Authority,

Interpol and the Uganda Police, among others. In the alternative the IRCU and its partners recommend strengthening the Capacity of the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA) in respect to implementing the Bill, rather than creating another registration framework under the department of Peace and Security.

5. The IRCU and its partners recommend that Government should strengthen Private Public Partnerships instead of stifling the engagement and participation of NGOs, religious and faith-based organizations in Policy formulation, implementation, and development. Inclusive governance requires the participation of all stakeholders, regardless of background or status, to have a voice in shaping policies and institutional practices, promoting equity, participation, and social justice.
6. The IRCU and its partners recommend the creation of an alternative dispute resolution mechanism to expeditiously address matters arising from the actions and omissions of the Minister or the department of Peace and Security, before any court process, for example the creation of a functional inter-ministerial tribunal since the functions under the Bill overlap mandates of other agencies. This will address the issue of backlog in the Courts and guard against unnecessary delay of justice in business and related transactions.
7. The Punishments generally proposed in the Bill, should be reasonable and proportionate, aligned to Constitutional guarantees and sentencing Guidelines.
8. The law should not restrict the amount of funds to be received but instead strengthen the existing entities like the FIA, Bank of Uganda, NGO Bureau and the Deposit Protection Fund of Uganda, that require proof for the source of Funding and the purpose the Funds received.
9. Parliament should consciously safeguard the Protection of constitutional freedoms and rights as provided for in the Bill of Rights under Chapter Four of the 1995 Constitution as amended especially freedom of association and expression, the right to fair hearing before administrative bodies, the right to acquire resources to run faith, civic and political organizations from other sources a part from Government among other rights that may be stifled under the Bill.
10. There is need to respect the independence of faith and civic institutions which is a fundamental principle that is respected in various international and national frameworks potentially leading to the socio economic and spiritual development of the country. The Bills needs to recognize the role

of civic, religious and faith-based Organizations in service delivery in Uganda which may potentially be undermined by the Bill.

11. The IRCU recommends that since this Bill will have a significant impact on the social economic development of the Country, the Bill should be considered as one of subjects for discussions in the envisioned National Dialogue.

### **1.3 CONCLUSION**

Chairperson and Honourable Members, Given the above reasons, the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, **rejects the Bill in its current Form** due to the possible Constitutional violations including the possibility of the Bill, shrinking civic space, endangering both civil, religious and political rights while creating legal conflicts with the existing financial regulations as highlighted herein.

Honourable Members, a strong law is not one that restricts broadly. It is one that distinguishes carefully. If we draw the line well, we will protect the nation without weakening the very people who sustain it.

It is our considered opinion that the Government needs to align foreign funding oversight with the existing Anti Money Laundering/Financial Intelligence Authority frameworks than creating a parallel regime that will eventually curtail the sovereignty of the people of Uganda.

We respectfully caution Parliament that if the Bill is passed as it is, it threatens the existence of religious and faith-based institutions organizations as it will stifle their funding base, open up their financial and internal affairs to the scrutiny and oversight of government while grossly hindering religious freedom, independence and Evangelism.

Finally considering where the country is, since we have just gone through a polarizing exercise (elections), we as religious leaders feel that the efforts of key institutions like Parliament, should be focused on building bridges and nurturing harmony. We are therefore troubled that we are focusing on a Bill like this which will further destabilize and unsettle communities. It is therefore, our considered view, and also the expectations of the population that there are more pressing issues affecting them, that should be preoccupying our time and resources to address.

For God and Our Country!!