UGANDA

GCPEA identified at least 30 reported attacks on school and university students and university personnel during this reporting period. Police and military reportedly used excessive force, including live ammunition and teargas, to disperse protests, in addition to detaining or arresting at least 135 university students participating in education-related protests, some of which turned violent.

Context

In Uganda, the police and military used excessive force against school and university students and university staff between 2017 and 2019. During the reporting period, security and governance declined in the East African nation, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG) and international media.2125

Outspoken critics of the government were routinely arrested, detained, or faced persistent harassment from the police and military, according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.2126 Several public figures, such as Dr. Stella Nyanzi of Makerere University, were arrested for critical statements.2127

Within this context, students and academics protested the proposed constitutional amendment to remove the age limit for presidential candidates in 2017.2128 Students also protested increases to university fees in 2018 and 2019.2129 Uganda has not previously been profiled in Education under Attack, thus no comparisons with prior reporting periods can be made.

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA collected at least five reports of incidents of attacks on school students.2130 Police used live ammunition and teargas on, and arrested, secondary school students who were protesting school-specific policies and events, over the course of the reporting period. In some cases, student activities turned violent before police intervention; however, in others, student protests were peaceful. While cases of students using violence against teachers, or the reverse, do not meet GCPEA's criteria for inclusion, allegations of state police firing on, or otherwise using force against, student protesters do qualify and are covered. Examples of reported incidents included:

- Local media outlet Daily Monitor and the Uganda Human Rights Commission reported that on June 26, 2017, police fired live ammunition to disperse a student strike, seriously injuring three students of Kacheera High School in Rakai town and district.2131
- Local media outlet Daily Monitor reported that on November 15, 2017, a student strike over increased tuition at the Ndorwa Muslim Secondary School, in Kabale town and district, turned violent as students threw stones at teachers. In response, anti-riot police reportedly fired live ammunition and teargas to disperse student protesters.2132
- On August 1, 2018, in Buhweju district, students at Nyakitoko Secondary School reportedly held a protest to demand that the school principal resign, as reported in local media outlet Daily Monitor. Police allegedly shot and killed an 18-year old student and injured another 22-year old student while dispersing the gathering. Two police officers were reportedly arrested after the event.2133
- On March 14, 2019, police reportedly fired teargas and live ammunition at secondary school students participating in a violent protest at Kigezi High School in Kabale town and district. Students allegedly attacked a teacher and threw stones at police, according to local media outlet Uganda Radio Network.2134

Attacks on higher education

During the 2017-2019 reporting period, GCPEA compiled at least 25 reported attacks on higher education students and staff in which police used teargas, rubber bullets, live ammunition, and batons to forcefully disperse protests; police also detained or arrested at least 135 students under various charges, including not having a license to demonstrate.2135 Many of these attacks occurred at Makerere University in Kampala, where students demonstrated against a range of
higher education-related incidents, including the court case of Dr. Stella Nyanzi in May 2017.

In 2017, GCPEA collected approximately six reports of attacks on higher education. Examples included:

- Local media outlet Daily Monitor reported that police arrested 15 students and fired teargas and rubber bullets at student protesters at Makerere University who were participating in a demonstration on May 3, 2017, on campus. Students were protesting the university’s failure to issue key documents including exam results, transcripts, and identity cards.

- Local and regional news outlets The Independent, The Observer, and Africa News reported that on September 21, 2017, police arrested five Makerere University students after using teargas to disperse dozens of students who were organizing a march from campus to protest against the removal of age-limits for presidential candidates. Some of the arrests occurred on campus, according to local media.

- On May 10, 2017, four Makerere University students were reportedly arrested at Buganda Road Magistrate’s Court in Kampala after protesting for Dr. Stella Nyanzi’s immediate release during the hearing for her bail application, according to local media outlet New Vision. Holding placards, the students allegedly demanded the lecturer return to the university to resume her academic duties.

In 2018, attacks followed a similar pattern. Students protesting university policies or actions were met with arrest or excessive force in approximately nine reported incidents, for instance:

- Local news outlet Daily Monitor reported that on May 7, 2018, students at Busoga University, Iganga town and district, protested the institution’s administration which, due to licensing problems, could not allow students to take final exams. Eight students were arrested the following day on campus.

- On September 10, 2018, the Counter Terrorism Police and Military Police reportedly used teargas and live bullets in response to student protests at Makerere University in Kampala, according to local news source PML Daily. The students were protesting against the 15 percent increase in tuition fees, passed by the university council; 16 students were allegedly arrested in the protests, as reported in Daily Monitor.

- Students at Kyambogo University in Kampala reportedly protested an increase in tuition fees on October 22, 2018. As reported in Daily Monitor, police allegedly used teargas and fired rubber bullets to defuse the protest.

- Local media outlet Uganda Radio Network reported that on November 2, 2018, police used teargas and live ammunition to disperse a student protest at Uganda Christian University, Mbale town and district. Students were demonstrating to demand a vote recount in recent student elections.

In 2019, GCPEA identified a slight increase in reported attacks on higher education, as compared to prior years; 11 reported incidents were collected, which included:

- Local media outlets Daily Monitor and PML Daily reported that on February 6, 2019, police and military forces arrested an unspecified number of students at Makerere University who were protesting the university’s handling of a lecturer strike and failure to resume courses. Students allegedly burned wood on nearby roads, though no reports of violence were recorded.

- Local news source Uganda Radio Network reported that military police physically assaulted and injured a lecturer at Makerere University on March 14, 2019, after dispersing an earlier student protest.

- On August 26, 2019, police reportedly used teargas and live ammunition to disperse protesting Engineering and Medicine students at Kabale University, Kabale district, according to local news source Uganda Radio Network. The students allegedly protested over a recent increase in their tuition and the requirement that they repeat a year if retaking a course.

- According to Human Rights Watch and Scholars at Risk, police reportedly arrested at least 20 students, many of them female, on October 22, 2019, who organized a protest at Makerere University in Kampala over a 15 percent increase to tuition. The students allegedly were arrested for “inciting violence” and “unlawful assembly”; they were released later that day.
On October 23, 2019, students at Makerere University in Kampala reportedly continued to protest over increased tuition fees, but added to their grievances the arrest of fellow students the day before, according to Scholars at Risk. Students reportedly threw rocks and other objects at police and military officers and set tires on fire. Police and the military reportedly responded with teargas and rubber bullets.

As student protests continued, police and the military reportedly arrested 12 students and fired teargas into two student dormitories on October 24, 2019, at Makerere University in Kampala. Military soldiers then entered one dormitory that evening and physically assaulted several students, according to Human Right Watch, Scholars at Risk, and local media.

In Gulu town, police reportedly arrested at least four students from Gulu University, located in Gulu district, on November 1, 2019, who had organized a peaceful protest the day before as a show of solidarity with their fellow students at Makerere University. As mentioned above, Makerere University students protested a tuition increase in October 2019.


249 URN (Uganda), as cited in ACLED, Event ID UGA5647; Samuel Amanya, “Police Fires Live Bullets, Teargas to Disperse Rowdy Kabale University Students,” Uganda Radio Network, August 26, 2019.


251 Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, Makerere University, October 23, 2019.


253 URN (Uganda), as cited in ACLED, Event ID UGA5726; “Police foils Gulu varsity strike, arrests 4 students,” Edge, November 1, 2019.