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The Electoral Commission's roadmap to the 2026 election sparks widespread condemnation from opposition parties and political analysts. The abduction and detention of prominent Ugandan opposition leader Dr Kiiza Besigye from Nairobi (Kenya) raises fears of a military crackdown on President Yoweri Museveni's (1986-present) political opponents. The World Bank warns of potential outbreak of protests in Uganda due to the rising cost of living and corruption.

Electoral Commission roadmap sparks widespread criticism

Opposition parties and political analysts have condemned the **Electoral Commission's (EC)** roadmap as Uganda prepares for the 2026 general elections. The EC released a revised roadmap in August which began with the field demarcation of constituencies, electoral areas and reorganisation of polling stations between 6 and 16 August 2024.¹ The revised programme has a series of activities lined up from January 2025 and will culminate with the polling period for presidential, parliamentary, and local government councils between 12 January and 9 February 2026.²

The deadline for resignation by public servants intending to contest parliamentary elections has been set for 13 June 2025, resignation by public servants intending to contest Local government elections on 2 August 2025 while public servants intending to contest presidential election must resign by 1 October.³ However, opposition parties have since noted that the opaque processes, compressed timelines, and insufficient stakeholder involvement raise serious questions about the roadmap's fairness and inclusivity, which casts doubt on the credibility of the upcoming polls.⁴

Opposition parties including the **National Unity Platform (NUP)**, **Democratic Party (DP)**, and **Uganda People's Congress (UPC)** claim that the implementation of the electoral activities has been marred by poor communication and unexplained changes.⁵ The parties have said that the adjustments to electoral boundaries and campaign timelines have reportedly been introduced without sufficient public consultation, fuelling allegations of bias and deepening mistrust.

DP secretary general **Gerald Siranda** argued in a November party event that the roadmap is skewed in favour of the ruling **National Resistance Movement (NRM)**, citing examples such as the recent **Kisoro (Western Region)** by-election, where opposition candidates were allegedly given less time to campaign than their NRM counterparts:

*"This roadmap falls short of the transparency and fairness required for credible elections, critical elements like boundary demarcations and campaign timelines have been introduced without adequate consultation. This lack of engagement undermines public trust and raises questions about the intentions behind these changes."*⁶

¹ Electoral Commission 30 Jul 2024

² Electoral Commission 30 Jul 2024

³ Electoral Commission 30 Jul 2024

⁴ ARC Briefing Uganda writer

⁵ ARC Briefing Uganda writer

⁶ Nile Post, 25 Nov 2024

An official with the NUP told **ARC Briefing** that the rushed programme which left out proposed reforms on campaign financing, voter education, and regulations on political parties shows that the EC will not deliver credible elections in 2026.⁷

Justice minister and DP leader **Norbert Mao** proposed a set of electoral reforms on 19 September that include the introduction of compulsory electronic voting, banning fundraising activities during election campaigns to curb financial influence, regulating freedom of speech and assembly, addressing the conduct of campaigns and public events, introducing stricter measures against public servants engaging in political activities and limiting military involvement in elections, a recurring concern in previous electoral cycles.⁸

There is doubt over the likelihood of Mao's proposed reforms being adopted, given the entrenched political environment. Political analyst, Professor **Rogers Barigayomwe**, told the local media on 3 December that meaningful reforms as proposed by Mao are unlikely in a system where policies are primarily crafted to protect individual interests rather than the public good:

"Even if Mao is sincere, his track record and the constraints of his position make it difficult to trust these proposals will bring significant change. The government does not want fundamental shifts."⁹

Barigayomwe warns that any attempt by Mao to challenge the status quo within the cabinet could result in serious political consequences - Mao in 2022 signed a memorandum of understanding with President **Yoweri Museveni** (1986-present) which resulted in him being rewarded with a ministerial position and Siranda benefited with the position of member of parliament (MP) for the **East African Community (EAC)**.¹⁰ In the 42-clause agreement, the two parties not only agreed to share political power but also to foster constitutionalism and the respect of human rights. The DP agreed to cooperate with the ruling NRM in supporting the overall governance agenda and supporting parliamentary votes on matters of confidence and supply for the full term (2021-2026) of this parliament.¹¹

Fear over military crackdown on opposition

The abduction of prominent opposition leader Dr **Kiiza Besigye** from **Nairobi (Kenya)** has raised fears of a military crackdown on political opponents of Museveni ahead of the 2026 elections. Besigye, a four-time presidential contender and avid critic of Museveni, was abducted on 13 November by Ugandan security forces from Nairobi, where he had reportedly gone to attend the book launch of former Kenyan justice minister **Martha Karua**. Besigye was brought back to **Kampala** where he appeared in a military court martial on four counts relating to security, illegal possession of two pistols, and illegal possession of eight rounds of ammunition.¹²

The opposition has viewed the abduction as orchestrated by the military to 'silence' critics of Museveni, and reflects a broader pattern of political repression by the military against Museveni's political opponents in the run-up to the elections:

"The abduction shows total disregard for the legal processes and highlights the oppressive methods used against the opposition leaders in Uganda which demonstrates shrinking space for political activism."¹³

It has been speculated that the kidnap and detention of Besigye is connected to his new political party-**People's Front for Freedom (PFF)** whose registration papers have been submitted to the EC.¹⁴

⁷ Source, NUP official, Kampala

⁸ Daily Monitor, 20 Sep 2024

⁹ Nile Post, 3 Dec 2024

¹⁰ ARC Briefing Uganda writer

¹¹ URN, 22 Jul 2022

¹² Chimpreports, 1 Dec 2024

¹³ Source, member of parliament (MP), Kampala

¹⁴ ARC Briefing Uganda writer

He is also the key link between the new party and donors who trust him more than any other opposition politician in Uganda at the moment.

Uganda's military has in the past been accused of coming up with trumped up charges against political opponents of Museveni for them to be court-martialled during an election period.¹⁵ In 2018, the military was accused of sneaking guns into the hotel room of NUP leader, **Robert Sentamu** (also known as **Bobi Wine**) and later charging him in a military court with illegally possessing a firearm *Illegal Possession of Firearm*.¹⁶

World Bank warns of corruption sparking unrest in Uganda

The **World Bank** has warned in its latest **Africa Pulse Report** of a potential outbreak of protests in Uganda due to the rising cost of living and corruption. The report highlights increasing economic challenges in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, where a combination of rising living costs, corruption, and governance failures have contributed to a volatile environment:

"In Uganda, demonstrations targeting alleged corruption by senior officials, including the parliamentary speaker, shined a bright light on the growing frustration with entrenched power structures resistant to accountability".¹⁷

In July, Ugandan security forces arrested dozens of demonstrators attempting to march to the parliament building in Kampala to protest high-level corruption. Authorities had deemed the protests illegal, prompting a heavy deployment of police and military personnel throughout the city, particularly in areas where small groups of protesters had assembled (*see ARC Briefing Uganda Aug 2024*).

The report warns that the high cost of living, corruption and, more broadly, weak governance that has triggered protests and palpable anger among the youth in **Kenya, Nigeria** and Uganda has the potential to spread throughout the region. The World Bank notes that this dissatisfaction if left unaddressed, could have regional implications. High levels of youth unemployment, combined with a perceived lack of opportunity, create fertile ground for further unrest across the continent. In nations like Uganda, where over 75% of the population is under 30, economic exclusion could result in prolonged instability, underscoring the urgency for government-led reforms.¹⁸

Uganda's outlook in 2025

2025 will be a heightened period of political activities and unrest in Uganda as Museveni gets ready to seek to extend his 40-year-old grip on power. As mentioned, the EC has scheduled a series of activities starting from January and will culminate in the nominations for parliamentary and presidential candidates in October.

Museveni has already started traversing the country mobilising for the 2026 elections under the guise of carrying out evaluation for the **Parish Development Model (PDM)** projects.¹⁹ In 2025, Museveni is likely to keep using the military to contain his opponents from traversing the country to mobilise for support.²⁰ The military will get more involved during the electioneering process by blocking political rallies, arresting and detaining political opponents of the regime right from March 2025, when most political parties will be carrying out party primary elections.

The opposition parties will be heading to the polls weakened and fractured as the ruling party has infiltrated all the leading opposition parties in Uganda. The NUP will struggle in 2025 to maintain its support base among the youths amidst accusations that most of its representatives in parliament have

¹⁵ ARC Briefing Uganda writer

¹⁶ Softpower, 16 Aug 2018

¹⁷ World Bank Africa Pulse Report Oct 2024

¹⁸ World Bank Africa Pulse Report, Oct 2024

¹⁹ ARC Source, 2 Dec 2024

²⁰ ARC Source, 2 Dec 2024

been bribed by the ruling party as seen in their recent rebellion against the party leadership.²¹ The second largest opposition party, the **Forum for Democratic Change (FDC)**, has split into two factions amidst accusations that some of its members have received ‘dirty money’ from the state.

Regarding the economy, the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** projects that economic growth will reach 7% in 2025, buoyed by stronger regional growth as global supply chains normalise. The oil sector will continue ramping up investments in wells and pipelines, further underpinning growth and future exports.²²

Planner

5 Dec 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Bank of Uganda** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting

Jan 2025 **(Uganda)** National Voters’ Register update

12 Jan – 9 Feb 2026 **(Uganda)** General election

Chronology

2 Dec 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Chimpereports. The Bank of Uganda** (central bank) confirms that two incidents of fraudulent activity, involving international payments being diverted, were processed from within its systems;

1 Dec 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Chimpereports. Equity Bank Uganda Limited** announces the resignation of managing director, **Anthony Kituuka**, effective 28 November;

1 Dec 2024 **Nairobi (Kenya) News Central Africa.** President **William Ruto** announces that he and his **Ugandan** counterpart, **Yoweri Museveni**, have offered to mediate the ongoing dispute between **Ethiopia** and **Somalia**;

30 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Nile Post. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS)** reports monthly inflation for November 2024 increased by 0.2%, largely attributed to the soaring prices of matooke and pineapples, which rose by 9.0% and 20.7%, respectively;

29 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Reuters.** Government spokesperson confirms the death toll from a landslide triggered by heavy rain in eastern Uganda has reached 17, with more than 100 others missing;

27 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Monitor. Bank of Uganda** (central bank) says it is awaiting a police report on an alleged hacking incident two weeks ago in which an estimated \$17m was taken out of the **Treasury** account;

27 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Reuters. United Kingdom**-headquartered **Standard Chartered** is exploring a potential divestment of its wealth and retail banking operations in **Botswana**, Uganda and **Zambia** as it seeks to free up capital in the midst of a broad shake-up;

26 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Nile Post.** Energy and mineral development minister **Ruth Nankabirwa** urges Ugandans to upgrade their prepaid Yaka meters ahead of the Token Identifier (TID) Rollover despite the deadline elapsing on 24 November. The country is nearing completion of a significant upgrade to its prepayment electricity meters, which is essential to maintaining uninterrupted electricity services for millions of consumers;

25 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Parliament Watch.** Parliament votes to advance the **National Coffee (Amendment) Bill, 2024**, which proposes the dissolution of the **Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA)** after 32 years of operation, with 159 in favour and 77, mainly from the opposition, against it;

²¹ ARC Briefing Uganda writer

²² African Economic Outlook 2024

25 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *VOA Africa*. Supporters of opposition leader **Kizza Besigye** will march to **Kenya's** embassy in Uganda today to protest what they call gross violations of human rights by the Ugandan and Kenyan governments following Besigye's arrest in Kenya;

24 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Relief web*. Uganda currently has 683 confirmed mpox cases and 2 deaths across 48 districts;

23 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Parliament Watch*. Members of parliament (MPs) reports that state-owned **Posta Uganda** has spent over US\$ 93 billion (\$25m) on airtime allowances for its board members, despite failing to pay US\$ 37m (\$10,046) in license fees to the **Uganda Communications Commission (UCC)**;

23 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *AFP*. Government spokesperson **Chris Baryomunsi** says the arrest of opposition leader **Kizza Besigye** was carried out in Kenya with the knowledge of Kenya's government;

22 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Daily Monitor*. The **Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** calls for a halt to all funding for the **International Specialized Hospital in Lubowa (Central Region)**, citing it as a "ghost project" that is likely to cost Ugandans far more than the US\$ 286 billion (\$77.6m) already spent, with no tangible work to show for it;

21 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Reuters*. **Kenya** says it is investigating how Ugandan opposition leader **Kizza Besigye** was allegedly kidnapped in Kenya last week before re-appearing in a Ugandan military court on Wednesday;

20 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Jeune Afrique*. Opposition leader **Kizza Besigye** appears before a martial court in Kampala after reportedly being kidnapped in **Kenya**, accused of threatening national security and being in possession of two guns;

19 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *France24*. **Winnie Byanyima**, executive director of **United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)** and wife of opposition candidate **Kizza Besigye**, calls for Besigye's release, saying he was kidnapped on 16 November in **Nairobi (Kenya)** and is reportedly being held in a military jail in Kampala;

19 Nov **Kampala (Uganda)** *Chimp Reports*. **High Court of Uganda** directs **Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA)** to pay \$2.5m to **Joyce Lucia Burungi** for violation of her exploration rights, ruling that UNRA's construction of **Hoima-Kaiso-Tonya Road** interfered with her mining operation;

19 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *UBC*. Energy and mineral development minister announces plans to relocate thousands of residents from seven villages in **Kidera Sub- County (Eastern Region)** to pave the way for Uganda's first nuclear power plant;

18 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *BBC*. **Emmanuel Nabugodi** is sentenced to 32 months in jail after creating a video on social media platform **TikTok** that allegedly insults President **Yoweri Museveni**;

17 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *East African*. Legislators from the **Bugisu Parliamentary Group** and the **Buganda Parliamentary Caucus** have intensified their opposition to the government's plan to abolish the **Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA)** and transfer its functions to the agriculture ministry;

16 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Nile Post*. A temporary diversion of vehicles through the **Murchison Falls National Park** following the closure of the **Karuma Bridge (Western Region)** has created an environmental crisis, with unchecked traffic, pollution, and limited resources threatening both wildlife and tourism;

15 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Parliament Watch**. Tea farmers appeal for a US\$ 126 billion (\$34.2) government bailout to rescue the sector from collapse due to plummeting global tea prices, leading some farmers to abandon their tea gardens;

13 Nov 2024 **Kampala (Uganda) Polity**. Finance ministry announces its intention to cut 98% of external borrowing in the financial year ending June 2026 due to its increasing public debt which is currently stands at \$25.6 billion;

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