

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

Uganda Monthly Briefing March 2025

Uganda Summary 10 March 2025

As the October start date for the presidential and parliamentary elections campaigns in Uganda draws nearer, attacks on opposition supporters start to increase, sparking concern. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) reports that annual inflation rate increased to 3.7% in February, up from 3.6% in January and 3.3% in December, its highest rate over the last six months Uganda deploys 1,000 additional soldiers to the volatile Ituri Province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) amid speculation that the deployment is aimed at securing its smuggling routes in DRC.

Clampdown on opposition supporters in Uganda

As the October start date for the presidential and parliamentary elections campaigns in Uganda draws nearer, attacks on opposition supporters have already begun to increase. On 3 March, the **Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force** and **Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF)** clashed with supporters at an opposition **National Unity Platform (NUP)** campaign rally for a parliamentary by-election in **Kawempe**, a suburb of **Kampala**.¹

However, it is reports of masked gunmen who move in busses, locally known as drones, attacking opposition supporters that has sparked greater concern.² The police and the army have feigned ignorance of the identity of the masked gunmen but video footage aired by local television stations shows these individuals emerging from buses in the company of the army and the police.³ Local newspaper, the **Daily Monitor**, has identified some of the masked gunmen as members of the **Boda Boda 2010**, a militia group that terrorised opposition supporters between 2016 and 2021 under former inspector general of police **Kale Kayihura**.⁴

NUP president **Robert Kyagulanyi** (also known as **Bobi Wine**) confirmed in a social media post that the party intends to seek legal redress against some of the masked gunmen who have been identified, calling them "*the faces of evil*":

"Although most of them were hooded, journalists' cameras were able to capture some faces. These thugs were armed to the teeth with guns, batons, sticks, wires, knives, etc. They moved around shooting, beating and cutting our people."⁵

The brutality of the group has also attracted condemnation across the political divide. The ruling **National Resistance Movement's (NRM)** chairman Dr. **Tanga Odoi**. **Odoi** accused the group of unleashing terror on innocent people in order to discredit the government and de-campaign its candidate in the Kawempe by-election, **Faridah Nambi**.⁶ The Archbishop of **Kampala**, Arch Diocese **Paul Ssemwogerere**, has also weighed in on the development, and on 2 March, urged the government to allow free and fair political competition or abolish elections instead of resorting to torture of political opponents.⁷

¹ Daily Monitor, 3 Mar 2025

² ARC Briefing writer, Kampala

³ NBS TV, 5 Mar 2025

⁴ Daily Monitor, 5 Mar 2025

⁵ Facebook, 3 Mar 2025

⁶ NBS TV, 3 Mar 2025

⁷ Independent, 2 Mar 2025

Parliament's speaker **Anita Among** has also tasked the government to explain the recent wave of abductions and illegal detentions of NUP supporters, following NUP leaders' revelations that seven of their members had gone missing.

This clampdown imposed on opposition supporters has also set the tone for the upcoming January 2026 general election and could impact the outcome of the election, with some political figures actually considering not voting.⁸ A source told **ARC Briefing** that he is likely not to vote in the next elections:

"For the first time since I started voting, I am not sure I will travel again to Bushenyi to vote. I am not sure it's worth it to spend 40,000 shillings (\$10.8) to go and cast a vote as I always did. I will need to make up my mind on that issue".⁹

Inflation rate increases

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) reported on 28 February that annual inflation rate increased to 3.7% in February, up from 3.6% in January and 3.3% in December, its highest rate over the last six months.¹⁰ However, core inflation slowed from 4.2% in January to 3.9% in February. Headline inflation includes perishables and non-perishables while core inflation excludes perishables, which could be impacted by weather change.

The **Stanbic Bank Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI)** reports the high inflation is driven by the annual food crops inflation that inched up 0.2% in January, compared to -0.7% in December. Some of the other food items that experienced material price hikes included, tomatoes, avocado, leafy vegetables, and especially fish that was up 17% vs 8.9% in the previous month.¹¹ Another large driver was insurance and financial services which rose 7% month-on-month.¹²

Bank of Uganda (BoU) (central bank) on 6 February opted to hold its key lending rate at 9.75%, anticipating that core inflation will remain between 4% and 5% this year but adding that the inflationary outlook is uncertain due to geopolitics, extreme weather and the strong **United States (US)** dollar.¹³

Despite the current inflation and low demand for goods and services, Uganda's medium-term economic outlook remains positive with the projected GDP growth of between 6.5% and 6.7% for the 2024/25 financial year and 7% and 7.5% for the 2025/26 financial year, driven by investments in the oil sub-sector and infrastructure projects new orders.¹⁴

Stanbic Bank also warned that potential delays in securing financing for oil-related infrastructure could push first oil production beyond the 2025/26 financial year.¹⁵ Energy and mineral development ministry spokesperson **Patricia Litho** confirmed on 11 February that Uganda would miss its 2025 deadline. However, industrial activity and the services sector are expected to grow, with significant benefits if funding for the **East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)** is secured and even if first oil is delayed, ongoing investment in the oil sector is expected to support economic activity.

Uganda's deployment in DRC linked to smuggling routes

The UPDF confirmed on 4 February that it deployed an additional 1,000 soldiers to support its 4,000 other soldiers deployed under **Operation Shujaa** in **Ituri Province (Democratic Republic of Congo) (DRC)**. Chief of the defence forces, General **Muhoozi Kainerugaba** posted on X on 15 February that Uganda would attack **Bunia** (Ituri) unless "*all forces there surrender their arms within*

⁸ ARC Briefing writer, Kampala

⁹ ARC source, political aide to potential presidential candidate, Kampala

¹⁰ UBOS, 28 Feb 2025

¹¹ Stanbic Bank PMI, Mar 2025

¹² Source, head of private banking, Kampala

¹³ Reuters, 6 Feb 2025

¹⁴ Source, head of private banking, Kampala

¹⁵ ARC Briefing writer, Kampala

24 hours” before confirming that the additional deployment was to counter increased attacks by the **Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)**:

*“My People the Bahima are being attacked. That is a very dangerous situation for those attacking my people. No one on this earth can kill my people and think he will not suffer for it. Bunia will soon be in UPDF hands”.*¹⁶

However, there is also speculation that the deployment is aimed at securing Uganda’s gold mining and smuggling routes in the DRC, which could be under threat due to the presence of the **Rwanda Defence Force’s (RDF)** and the Rwanda-backed **M23** rebels in both **North Kivu** and **South Kivu** provinces (DRC).¹⁷ Uganda does not want to risk being ‘locked out’ by Rwanda from these lucrative routes but the two countries have improved their relationship of late and cannot engage in a direct clash.

The RDF and UPDF clashed in **Kisangani** (DRC) during the **Second Congo War** in 1999 after supporting different rebel factions. The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** fined Uganda in 2022 and ordered the country to pay \$325m to the DRC for its role in the conflict and plunder of natural resources during the war. The country currently pays yearly instalments of \$65m.¹⁸

The UPDF will actively avoid being drawn into the conflict, given the historical context and its current relationship with Rwanda, but the two countries will now need to navigate balancing both their interests in DRC’s vast minerals which could prove contentious.

Planner

8 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** International Conference on Tourism Statistics and Economic Contribution;

May 2025 **(Uganda) Bank of Uganda** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting

Aug 2025 **(Uganda) Bank of Uganda** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting

20 – 25 Sep 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** **Uganda International Oil & Gas Summit**

Nov 2025 **(Uganda) Bank of Uganda** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting

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

Chronology

6 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Africa CDC*. **Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)** says a second illness cluster has been identified in Uganda's **Ebola** outbreak;

5 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Nile Post*. The ruling **National Resistance Movement (NRM)** accuses security forces of undermining its chances in the upcoming **Kawempe North** by-election, with NRM **Electoral Commission** chairman Dr. **Tanga Odoi** alleging that police actions have benefited the opposition;

4 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Reuters*. **United Nations** appeals for \$11.2m in funding to support Uganda’s response to an **Ebola** outbreak that has killed two people as the country’s health budget faces constraints following **United States (US)** aid cuts;

3 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Mining Weekly*. Uganda signs its first mining production sharing agreement (PSA) to revive the **Kilembe** copper and cobalt mine;

2 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Al Jazeera*. Health ministry confirms that a four-year-old has been identified as the second patient to die from the **Ebola** after a recent outbreak;

¹⁶ X, 15 Feb 2025

¹⁷ ARC source, local journalist, Kampala

¹⁸ Independent 14 Feb 2022

1 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *NTV*. Energy minister **Ruth Nankabirwa** says **Uganda Electricity Distribution Company** will take over operations of Uganda's main electricity distribution company, **Umeme Limited**, adding that she's confident the transition will be smooth and no operations will be disrupted;

1 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Daily Monitor*. Officials from the **Uganda Chamber of Energy and Minerals (UCEM)** denounce the continuous demonisation of gold trade, which they say is affecting the sector;

2 Mar 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *AFP*. **Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)** confirms it has sent soldiers to **Mahagi (Ituri Province)** in eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** at the request of the Congolese army following alleged massacres carried out by rebel group **Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO)**;

28 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *UBOS*. **Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS)** says the cost of living in Uganda has experienced a notable rise, with tomatoes and fresh leaf vegetables emerging as the primary contributors to monthly inflation;

27 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Parliament*. Members of parliament (MPs) demand that action be taken against security personnel who attacked and injured top TV journalist, **Ibrahim Miracle**, who was covering the nomination of candidates for the **Kawempe North** by-election as leader of the opposition, **Joel Ssenyonyi**, alleges that the journalist was assaulted individuals believed to be members of the **Joint Anti-Terrorism Taskforce (JATT)**;

26 Feb 2024 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Parliament*. Parliament passes the **Public Service Pension Fund Bill, 2024** that will see public servants contribute 5% of their salaries to the pension scheme;

25 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Al Jazeera*. The **International Federation of the Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** launches an emergency appeal for CHF 6m (\$6.8m) to help contain **Uganda's** eighth Ebola outbreak since 2000, which has already resulted in nine confirmed cases, including one death;

24 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *WHO*. Uganda enters a 42-day countdown in its battle against the **Sudan Virus Disease (SVD)** outbreak, which belongs to the same family as **Ebola** disease, which will determine whether the outbreak is officially declared over;

22 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Independent*. **Makerere University** school of law deputy principal **Zahara Nampewo** says the government's directive that the military would take on all new government-funded construction projects in the health and education sectors has left private contractors struggling to maintain their businesses and that there is growing concern that the directive is the latest in a series of moves to consolidate and centralise power;

21 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *WHO*. **World Health Organisation (WHO)** reports that Uganda has so far recorded 3,391 confirmed cases of mpox and 23 deaths;

20 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *WHO*. **World Health Organisation (WHO)** reports that as of 20 February, nine confirmed cases of Sudan Virus Disease, including one death have been reported in Uganda, since the outbreak was declared on 30 January 2025;

19 Feb **Kampala (Uganda)** *Parliament Watch*. The government is seeking parliamentary approval to borrow \$190.98m from **Stanbic Bank** to facilitate the buyout of Uganda's main electricity distribution company, **Umeme Limited**, with parliament's speaker **Anita Among** referring the proposal to the **Committee on National Economy** for scrutiny before a final decision is made;

18 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *AFP*. **Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF)** deploys additional soldiers to **Bunia** in eastern **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** to fight local militia;

18 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Independent*. The high court in Kampala sets 25 February as the date to decide on an application seeking the unconditional release of opposition leader **Kizza Besigye**;

17 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Al Jazeera*. Information minister **Chris Baryomunsi** says Uganda opposition leader **Kizza Besigye** will have his case transferred to a civilian court instead of a military trial for due to his failing health;

15 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)**. *Reuters*. Chief of the defence forces, General **Muhoozi Kainerugaba** says on X that Uganda will attack **Bunia (Democratic Republic of Congo)** unless "all forces" there surrender their arms within 24 hours;

14 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Nile Post*. Kampala hosts the **Uganda-European Union (EU) Business Insights 2025 Conference** which reinforces the growing trade and investment partnership between Uganda and the EU;

13 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Reuters*. Uganda launches the construction of 13.1m euros (\$14.2m) **ORIO mini hydropower project**, an initiative expected to expand electricity access to rural communities in western Uganda;

12 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *NTV*. **Uganda's** flagship agencies for its HIV/AIDS initiatives need 300 billion shillings (\$82 million) in extra funding to narrow a gap created after the US froze foreign assistance. **Uganda AIDS Commission** and **AHF Uganda Cares** require the funds to ensure uninterrupted access to treatment, laboratory monitoring and essential services in managing the virus, the **Kampala**-based parliament said, citing UAC Planning Director **Vincent Bagambe**;

11 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Aljazeera*. Health ministry says that all eight patients admitted with **Ebola** are in a stable condition, and 265 contacts of the confirmed cases have been placed under quarantine;

11 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *Business Day*. Energy and mineral development ministry spokesperson **Patricia Litho** says Uganda will not begin oil production this year, missing a long-standing target to begin extracting crude from its western fields this year;

10 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *NETEC*. Health ministry confirms that as of 10 February, there have been confirmed cases of Sudan Virus Disease, including five healthcare workers, and one reported death;

9 Feb 2025 **Kampala (Uganda)** *NTV*. Nongovernmental organisation **Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE)** says government agencies have yet to explain the source of Uganda's soaring gold exports, noting that despite the country shipping out large volumes of bullion, no corresponding production records;

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