

Script “Let’s talk human rights” FNF Human Rights Podcast– Uganda- Transcript

Moderator: Nangamso Kwinana

Guest: Bobi Wine

[00:00:00] **Nangamso Kwinana:** I warmly welcome you to this “Let’s talk human rights” podcast episode. My name is Nangamso Kwinana and I am happy that you have tuned in again. Thus far, in our journey through sub-Saharan Africa, we have met really exciting people.

Today, we welcome back a very special guest. And if you are still uncertain where the journey takes us, then listen to this excerpt:

[00:00:43] That's correct, it is Bobi Wine and today, our journey takes us back to Uganda. Our last episode explored the situation in Uganda one month before the presidential elections. Today we want to look at how things are in Uganda a few months after the elections. If you missed our previous Uganda episode, listen in. You will find these episodes wherever you listen to your podcasts.

[00:01:09] We have the pleasure and honour of again engaging: Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu! We are very pleased that Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu has taken the time to join our podcast for a second time. . He is better known under his stage name H. E. Bobi Wine. Bobi Wine is a Ugandan politician, Presidential Candidate, activist, singer, actor, businessperson and philanthropist. As of the 11th July 2017, he serves as Member of Parliament representing Kyadondo East constituency in Wakiso District, in Uganda's Central Region. Today, we invite Bobi Wine to share his views and reflect on the previous presidential election, advocating for the protection of the rule of law and democracy.

[00:01:57] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu:** Hello, good morning. And I'm very glad to be here. Yes. My name is Kyagulanyi Ssentamu Robert otherwise known as Bovie Wayne. I'm very glad to be here.

[00:02:09] **Nangamso Kwinana:** Thank you very much. Before we start with the interview, I would like to give you a few facts about Uganda.

Located in East Africa, the Republic of Uganda has borders with Southern Sudan as well as with Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Uganda also borders Lake Victoria (which is fondly referred to by locals as Nalubale).

[00:02:33] **News Clip 1:** For it's six term. I mean, it's incredible, uh, 37 years in power. Um, I, you know, it's, it's hard to believe it. That's this, maybe two generations of people that's all they've ever known. Um, what does it say about politics?

[00:02:58] **News Clip 2:** Bobby Wine was barely out of his baby's hands when president Museveni came into power. When you're small goaling Peter is when he first came into power, Museveni was heralded as part of the young generation of Africans who are going to break the the mould, you know, in his inaugural speech, president Museveni said, "The problem with Africans is, uh, leaders overstaying in power". And he added that this is not a mere change of guard but a fundamental change.

News Clip 3: Change to Africa, where Uganda goes to the polls next week, the hotly contested votes sees opposition leader, Bobby Wine say the violent presidential election campaign is like a war and a battlefield.

News Clip 4: This has been, as you said, most one of the violent elections I would say in this country where I've seen people being killed or dying of a bullet wounds.

[00:03:53] **Nangamso Kwinana:** Presidential elections took place in January 2021. President Yoweri Museveni, who has ruled for the last 34 years, started his sixth term in office. In 2005, the provision limiting the head of state's term of office to two terms was lifted and instead an age limit of 75 years for presidential candidates was introduced. In 2017, the parliament passed a controversial constitutional amendment by a two-thirds majority that abolishes even the age limit. These amendments paved the way for President Museveni's candidacy in the elections of January 2021.

[00:04:38] Human rights violations are rising in Uganda. Reports indicate that

1. violent disintegrations of protest demonstrations and
2. excessive violence by the security forces against the opposition parties, the media and the citizens are a reality.

Violations of freedom of speech, press and assembly are at the core of the said agenda by the incumbent ruling party.

[00:05:03] Museveni is changing the rules in his favour: He once said that Africa has a problem with leaders who stay in office too long. In 2001, he declared that this would be his last term in office. He has made this promise every term since.

It was one of the most violent election campaigns ever in the East African country of Uganda. At least 54 people died, presidential candidates were arrested for allegedly violating coronavirus regulations. Government critics were intimidated or jailed, and journalists were attacked. The Internet was shut down and international election observers were not accredited. How have the people reacted to the obviously unfair and not free elections?

[00:05:53] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Uh, thank you very much. I'm really glad that you mentioned that General Museveni is a real person [00:06:00] that mentioned, uh, when he had just taken power in 1986, that Africa's problem generally and Uganda in particular, they leaders that overstay power. But again, he's the same person who said, uh, in 2016 that he would never rule or run for president after he is 75. Unfortunately the following year, he's the same person that facilitated the amendment of the constitution. A violent amendment. I was member of parliament in 2017 and the parliament was raided. Members of parliament beaten and others have not actually, um, healed completely. And the constitution was violently changed. That is General Museveni

Anyway, back to your question about how people have reacted, um, the people of Uganda amidst terror, amidst state inspired violence have stood a firm, although, um, like we say that the election that just happened in January was the most violent election in the history of Uganda. Journalists we are not only intimidated and they were not only arrested, but many of them were killed - Journalists. Um, our supporters killed. My entire campaign team was rounded off and imprisoned without charge for seven months, I myself was, uh, uh, rounded up on the day of nomination. Um, tear gas, pepper spray, and all that. So. It was, in my opinion, what would pass for an election, unfortunately like he has always gotten away with, uh, all the ... got away with it. And now he ultimately declared himself president and that's where we are as Uganda.

[00:07:57] **Nangamso Kwinana:** Now, Bobby losing at the polls is one thing. Losing because of fraud and intimidation is a completely different story. How does it feel to know that especially the young people of Uganda are yearning for change and that they are putting their trust in you?

[00:08:14] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Well, um, I wouldn't really want to say the young people of Uganda are putting their trust in an individual - Me. I would want to say the young people of Uganda are putting their trust in an

idea, an idea whose time has come. And that is liberation. That is freedom to think for themselves and to determine their own destiny when they can. Especially in light of the fact that, uh, the average age of those, that rule over us in Uganda, are way in their late seventies and eighties. So the people of Uganda, especially the young people who account for over 80% of our population, it will be remembered that, uh, more than 80% of the population in Uganda have never seen another president. They were not born in 1986 when ... took over. These are the same people that have their voices stifled, even when they lined up for an entire day to go to the polls, their voice never counted because, um, the electoral commission just declared, um, results without even counting. The internet was shut off completely, radio stations were cut off, telephone lines were cut off, Uh, power electricity was cut, and ... ordered, um, those that work for him to declare the results that they declared. That is how we are in Uganda. Of course, the young people are in seasoned in their pursuit for freedom. As you were mentioned, that peaceful protests, uh, responded to with brute force with murder, uh, between the 18th and 19th of November last year, hundreds of people were shot dead extra judiciary on the street. Although the government of Uganda only accounted only mentioned 54 people, but there were many more. And that the were in their hundreds that were killed, you know, extra judiciary. Unfortunately the international community watched it, made a few comments and like many other cases of a mass murder, courtesy of government, it was shipped under the carpet.

[00:10:30] **Nangamso Kwinana:** That's a very powerful way of framing it, that the trust of the young people of Uganda are not necessarily placed in one individual, but rather that their trust is placed within the ideal that Bobby Wine represents. We have been advised that many of your party members were imprisoned. Have all of your comrades been released from prison by now?

[00:10:54] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Well, not, not all of them. And I must remind the world that the illegal arrests continue. Even as we speak right now, everybody, that dares to speak out against the regime or anybody that is perceived to be having an alternative view is rounded up just as this morning. Uh, the vice chancellor of one of the big universities in Uganda at the Victoria University was rounded up by armed security operators. And, uh, taken into illegal detention. So while people continue protesting, when the government releases 30, it arrests another 30, it is that vicious circle that continues since before the election, it happened during the election and it continues to happen even post.

[00:11:49] **Nangamso Kwinana:** You were under house arrest for a few weeks. Were you worried or concerned about being detained as well as even abducted? Especially in the view of past events, this would not have been unlikely.

[00:12:01] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Well, of course I was concerned I continue to be concerned, but I cannot only focus on my plight. I must say, I'm lucky that I sometimes get attention of, uh, the media whenever I am arrested unjustly and illegally, uh, it is spoken about, but my concern mainly goes to the hundreds and thousands of Ugandans who are unknown, who right now continue to rote in, uh, illegal and gazetted detentions centres. Who continue to be killed in extra judiciary, tortured in those, uh, um, dangles without knowledge. The few that we get to know are not as known or as popular as myself. So while I talk about my plight, I really want to put emphasis on the plight of those hundreds and thousands of Ugandans that are out there. I'm only a symbol or an example of the many other Ugandans that are suffering in a similar way. So yes, I am concerned. I was concerned. I continued to be concerned about myself, but I want to shine a light on the plight of those others who have nobody to speak for them.

[00:13:21] **Nangamsso Kwinana:** In our last episode, we hosted, together with you, Chapter Four human rights lawyer Nicholas Opiyo as a guest. We recently learned that 54 NGOs have been banned in Uganda, including Chapter Four. What is this about? Could this be another attempt by the government of Uganda to silence civilians?

[00:13:42] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Certainly, uh, I must say that even before they closure of a chapter four and many other, uh, non-governmental organizations, uh, even Nicolas' appeal himself was rounded up, uh, because he was investigating the extra judicial killings of, uh, people, including women and children, uh, who are mass murdered by the government on the 19th and 18th of November last year. But yes, there is an attack on civil society organizations. The regime in Uganda is trying as much as possible to silence every critical voice to silence every avenue that can, you know, highlight the plight of the people of Uganda. And the recent attack is ofcourse, on civil society organizations.

[00:14:36] **Nangamsso Kwinana:** Nicholas Opiyo was also detained over Christmas in a maximum-security military facility. Where does this hatred against human rights lawyers and other representatives of his profession stem from?

[00:14:54] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Well, the head of the truth stems from dictatorship, um, general ... wants to have absolute control and he will stay for, he will do anything. Uh, from arrest, torture and even brutal murder of any voice of dissent. Human rights is something that he's trying to crush completely. There's no human rights in Uganda, and that's why all these human rights organizations are crushed without mercy. Um, like I say, the while we are talking about the known ones that chapter falls on others. Um, individual citizens are facing the same plight,

[00:15:41] **Nangamso Kwinana:** Bobby Wine, Museveni is now a very old man and has been in office almost since your birth. How do you assess Museveni's strategy for the next few years? Do you expect the situation for the civilian population to worsen over the next years?

[00:16:00] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** I've said it before, and I'll use this opportunity to say it again, that every day that Museveni rules over Uganda, uh, the situation of the citizens worsens for every year that Museveni presides over our country goes backwards five years. So that has been the situation. While we say that General Museveni is growing older and was, and more intolerant every day, let's look in our recent history, Um, dictators never realized that their time is out. Uh, let's take an example of a Robert Mugabe who passed away in his nineties, and was still insisting in controlling Zimbabwe. General Museveni has controlled Uganda for the last 35 years, and he is not about to let the people of Uganda free. This is going to be the same way, the same thing, It only gets worse. Um, now that he has have a, yes, hardly a firm grip of all of the matters of the nation. He has his wife as the minister for education and sports. He has his brother, his brother controlling, uh, effectively controlling the economy, even when he does not officially hold any position. Uh, civil servant goes to him for a handout. He has his brother in law while effectively controlling cabinet. And his son is effectively in control of the military. The situation of the people of Uganda only gets worse because Uganda is not only controlled but owned literally by one family, by one cocoon that milks every aspect of life out of the people of Uganda.

[00:17:57] **Nangamso Kwinana:** And unfortunately, for as long as we have president Museveni at the head of state it means that the situation will continue to worsen. And that is quite a powerful message. You said after the election, this is no joking business. This is when the real fight begins. We are leading an entire generation out of slavery. Are you and your party hopeful for the next elections?

[00:18:23] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** We are not looking at elections because all elections under general Museveni are not going to be any different. We just came out of what was supposed to be an election, but this was an election that the military and police took over, uh, effectively, the electoral commission was not in control. I was not allowed to campaign. Like I said, I was rounded up and arrested from the nomination ground. Detained in my home. Um, I had to campaign putting on a bullet-proof vest and a ballistic helmet because live bullets were flying everywhere. Many of my campaign comrades were shot dead. Others were run over by military police and police vehicles, you know, and every now and then general Museveni would come out to brag about the murder of, uh, those people. I was always in and out of prison on the campaign trail. On the Eve of the election, the entire internet was switched off. Not just social media, but the entire internet was

switched off and as we speak right now, Facebook has never been restored in Uganda because it was the last platform of communication. Radio and TV stations were blocked and restricted from ever mentioning a word about the election. you know, uh, those that they had to report what was happening, uh, from the election ground, were raided and beaten live on air while everybody listened. And that was before the radio stations were switched off, you know, uh, in many regions, there was no election at.

[00:20:08] In the Western part of Uganda and the Northern part of Uganda, there was literally no election because military trucks were driving from one polling station to another, ticking, every available ballot paper in favor of gentleman Museveni. But even after doing that, you know, the vote, our votes were overwhelming that they couldn't, you know, they, they couldn't rig in their favor or going to the overwhelming number of relations. So what happened? The electoral commission chairman just goes on TV and says, okay, now the election is over and Museveni has won, period. Nothing else, because there was no internet to relay Uh, they, they, they, the results. They telephone lines had been cut off and that is the impunity that they operated with.

[00:21:02] So to think that Uh, there is going to be another free and fair election with general Museveni behaving in such a manner is something that would be farfetched. And that is why we've been calling upon the people of Uganda to one, get together and see that we rise against the dictatorship. But again, I've also been calling upon the international community, both regional, continental, and international to stop being facilitators of this evil. We have regional blocks. We have the east African community. We have the African union, they are watching this happening in one of their member states and nothing is being done. It's like they're partners in crime. You know, it is a shame to Africa. It is a shame to our generation to see that this is happening.

[00:21:56] It is being facilitated. Um, after all this is done, you see a president coming from functioning democracies flying into Uganda to officiate this. I wonder what this speaks to their citizens and what it speaks to this generation of Africans.

[00:22:15] **Nangamso Kwinana:** With that reflection in mind regarding the heads of states arriving in Uganda to officiate the atrocities that are taking place before we have to come to an end of this really exciting episode, please allow me one last question With well over 50 seats in parliament, your opposition National Unity Platform (NUP) emerged as the biggest winner, the media states Museveni seems to fear you. Do you have a hopeful message to share with Africa's young population?

[00:22:49] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu:** Definitely. This message is everywhere for, for, for, for everybody to see, uh, while many parts of Africa are still grouped with dictatorships, I must say there's hope. There is hope. Just recently, Zambia was going through almost the same challenges of a police brutality of a strong man and strong man lead no rulership. And the like. But the persistence of the people, ultimately bore fruit and they had to change peaceful change, moral change, constitutional change.

[00:23:30] So my message to Africans everywhere and Ugandans in particular is that don't give up. Mandela told us that it always seems impossible until it's done. It can be done. As a matter of fact, it will be done. We will be free. We only choose to be moral to be, non-violent not because you are not strong. We are strong, We are many, and we are angry enough to be violent, but we choose to be smarter than them because we know violence on the biggest. We continue the moral way, the constitutional way agitating for what's rightfully ours. But again, we can't do it alone. We have to do it with the rest of Africa. I know that it took the eyes of Africa, the eyes of the world, focused on Zambia that game's going to be played, immoral games going to be played.

[00:24:25] So I call upon Africa not to look at Uganda as an isolated case. You know, that brutality that happens in Uganda is a threat to the peace and democracies all over Africa. And when Uganda frees up, it will be an example and the motivation for other countries to free up. Zambia just freed up. That means we too can free up and everywhere else can free up.

[00:24:51] So I am hopeful. I want everybody else to be hopeful. Let us continue, uh, opening our eyes and ears. Let us continue playing our role. Um, let us not look at the strong man. Let us not look at individuals. I'm not here to tell people that you look at me as your savior. I am nobody's savior. I'm under playing my part. And if everybody plays their part, we, together can add up the pieces and mine. We can liberate this Africa, all these countries that we admire. In Europe, they have ever been ruled by brutal dictators. There was a time when Germany was under Hitler. There was a time when, uh, Russia was under Stalin. There was a time when, uh, in Europe we are the likes of Mussolini.

[00:25:39] Now we are free countries. You know, there was a time when South Africa was under Apartheid, you know, but now. Well, you can't say you are where you want to be, but at least you are not where you used to be. So I am hopeful that Uganda will also free up, but that freedom is not going to be free. That freedom is not going to come on a silver platter. It is a forward fall. It is not only cried for. I've said it before. And I say it again. That freedom comes to those who. Not to those who cry because the more you cry, the more your people continue to die. There's no freedom and negotiator. There's no freedom. crier. There are only freedom fighters, so let's continue fighting, morally.

[00:26:25] **Nangamso Kwinana:** Thank you very much for the interesting insights that you have shared with us. At this point, we would particularly like to thank you again, Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, for allowing us to use your music for our podcast!

[00:26:42] **Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu:** thank you very much. I appreciate. My music is not my music. It is our new. After all its purpose is to communicate. It's not entertainment. It's edutainment. So let the music play on

[00:26:55] **Nangamso Kwinana:** What an inspiring conversation - having Bobi Wine in the studio is certainly an experience I won't forget. The things that stood out for me from our conversation are

1. Bobi Wine and his team are resilient in the face of continued adversity and injustice. They are so committed to the cause that they continue to fight for freedom at tremendous personal cost.
2. What Bobi Wine said about the fact that as a movement they could resort to violence but are truly wanting to do things differently as in Bobi's words "violence begets violence" - it may seem impossible but many nations around the world and in Africa itself have transitioned from dictatorships to free nations and Uganda could have this too.
3. The powerful message Bobi shared at the end is one of hope and encouragement to keep on fighting for freedom.

This has been our special episode of "Let's talk human rights – the FNF Africa podcast exploring human rights issues". We hope you enjoyed it!

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