

Press Statement

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A Day to Honor the Life and Legacy of St. Janani Luwum *End enforced disappearances, torture and ensure accountability for past violations*

(Kampala, Uganda / 16 February 2023) Today, as we honor the life and legacy of the Late Archbishop Janani Luwum, a bold civil rights leader and champion of human rights, we are reminded of the need to do more as a country to ensure that there is respect for personal liberty, freedom from torture, the right to a fair trial, due process rights, the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations.

Hundreds of incidents of [enforced disappearances](#), incommunicado detention, long pre-trial detention, torture and other cruel treatment or punishment continue [to be reported today](#). There has been no accountability for most incidents, including [the November 2020 Kampala killings](#) and [the November 2016 Kasese killings](#). Civilians also continue to be [tried in military courts](#).

Archbishop Luwum cared deeply for personal liberty, human dignity, freedom from torture, equality and access to justice for all. He stood up for these fundamental rights and freedoms, every day. As a strong frontline advocate, he spoke truth to power and provided first line legal response to secure the release of people from unlawful detention.

During the peak of President Idi Amin's repression, military officers perpetrated acts of gross human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings of thousands of people. Many more were abducted and held in the torture dungeons across the country. Archbishop Luwum followed up on these cases. He often went physically to the office of the State Research Bureau to help to secure the release of prisoners.

When tensions between the Church and the State worsened in 1976, he continued to engage the government to demand for an end to extrajudicial killings and unexplained enforced disappearances. In February 1977, he delivered a note of protest to President Amin. When he was accused of siding with the government because of the continued engagement, [he noted](#), "I face daily (the risk of) being picked up by the soldiers... I have been threatened many times."

Amidst increased threats to his life, Archbishop Luwum remained steadfast. In response, he was accused of treason. He was arrested, subjected to a sham military trial on a charge of smuggling arms into the country on behalf of Obote-led rebels and shortly thereafter, he was murdered in cold blood. Residents of Mucwini discovered his body with bullet holes.

As we observe this day, take time to learn more about Archbishop Janani Luwum, his values, his human rights work, Uganda's political history and current human rights situation. Stand up for human rights and the rule of law.

For more information, contact
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