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## **City Bar Raises Concerns that Ugandan Government May Be Financing Human Rights Abuses with World Bank Loan**

New York, December 23, 2020 – The New York City Bar Association has sent a [letter](#) to Senator Chris Coons raising concerns that a “\$300 million World Bank loan to the Ugandan government, ostensibly intended to fund COVID-19 relief measures...may be financing ongoing human rights abuses committed by the security forces against political opposition candidates and their supporters ahead of the January 2021 presidential and parliamentary elections.”

According to the letter, signed by the Executive Director of the City Bar’s Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice and the Chairs of its African Affairs and International Human Rights Committees, the sum of the loan “closely resembles the amount (1.033 trillion Uganda Shillings) allocated to a supplementary classified expenditure budget by the Uganda government one month prior [to the loan]. In Uganda, classified expenditures go to the security forces, mainly the military and police, as well as to the Office of the President.” Moreover, while the supplemental classified expenditure budget was purportedly requested for COVID-19 relief, the letter notes that “the request allocates nearly 40 times more money to classified security items than to the health sector for the Covid-19 response” even though “39 of Uganda’s 134 districts have no hospital, and there are only 55 ICUs and 411 working ambulances in the entire country of some 43 million people.”

These grounds for suspicion are fanned by the Ugandan government’s “repressive and violent...track record of suppressing political opposition. Its security forces routinely torture legislators and kill opposition supporters,” the letter states. The letter points in particular to “indiscriminate shootings by Ugandan security forces” of peaceful opposition protesters, as well as the treatment of opposition leaders including Bobi Wine, who “has been arrested multiple times and suffered torture” and will still face Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in a January Presidential election. The government’s record on COVID-19 aid is similarly poor. It shut down a \$10 million aid program in order “to control all relief funds and thus ensure that opposition voices, especially among the poor, are held to ransom and silenced,” according to the letter.

The letter reiterates that there is “reason to believe that some of this classified expenditure money is being used to finance ongoing human rights abuses against the political opposition and

the continued militarization of January's scheduled elections," and that "the United States has a responsibility to ensure that World Bank funds do not abet repression and are used in ways consistent with America's commitment to the promotion of human rights and democracy."

Read the full letter here: <https://bit.ly/38tsk7i>

**About the Vance Center**

*The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice of the New York City Bar Association advances global justice by engaging lawyers across borders to support civil society and an ethically active legal profession. The Vance Center is a unique collaboration of international lawyers catalyzing public interest innovation that brings together leading law firms and other partners worldwide to pioneer international justice initiatives and provide pro bono legal representation to social justice NGOs. [www.vancecenter.org](http://www.vancecenter.org)*

**About the Association**

*The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has 25,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world. [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org)*