

NAIROBI, Kenya, September 22 (Infosplusgabon) - The Ugandan authorities must end their absurd attempts to silence people opposed to scrapping the presidential age limit, Amnesty International said Friday.

The human rights body made the demand as a motion on the controversial proposal was brought to parliament.

Earlier, the mayor of the country's capital, Kampala, was arrested by the police and bundled into a pick-up truck outside his home on suspicion that he was headed to a protest against the proposed change.

Some opposition MPs were blocked from accessing parliament to participate in the debate, which has now been postponed.

Demonstrations against the change were also banned, said the rights body in a press statement.

"It is ironic and absurd that as the bill is tabled in parliament, the government is blocking citizens from debating the issue," said Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes.

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The actions the government is taking in the case amount to criminalizing dissent and contravene both Ugandan and international law. the organization said.

The Executive Director of the Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies (GLISS), a policy think-tank, who has spoken out against the proposal, was detained in his office for most of the day Thursday.

This follows an overnight police siege there. ActionAid, an international NGO that works to combat poverty and injustice, was also raided on the same grounds.

“These raids are simply desperate attempts to harass and intimidate civil society organizations,” added Kagari.

She also wants confiscated property and documents returned to the owners.

Uganda's ruling party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), wants to amend the constitution to remove the presidential age limit of 75 years of age.

The move is widely seen as a way of allowing incumbent President Yoweri Museveni, 73, to stand for President again in 2021.

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