
**LEGAL OPINION AND ASSISTANCE TO GOVERNMENT
ON THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE PATRIOTIC LEAGUE OF UGANDA AND THE
HOLDING OF ITS CHAIRMANSHIP BY THE CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCES**

Kampala, 26 October 2026

A. MANDATE

1. The Uganda Law Society (“ULS”) issues this opinion under section 3 of the Uganda Law Society Act (Cap. 305). That section charges the Society to assist Government and the courts in all matters affecting legislation and the administration of law, and to protect and assist the public in all matters touching the law.

Under Article 3(4) of the Constitution, every citizen has the right and duty at all times to defend the Constitution. That duty weighs particularly heavily on the legal profession.

2. The Patriotic League of Uganda (“PLU”) emerged in 2023 from the “MK Movement”, a network formed to promote General Muhoozi Kainerugaba as a successor to the presidency. After he stood aside from the 2026 presidential race, PLU turned its machinery towards the 2031 election. In September 2026 it launched a nationwide drive to collect 20 million signatures endorsing him for the presidency, with endorsement registers placed in 146 districts. Regional launches followed, in West Nile on 14 September 2026 and at Adjumani on 20 October 2026, where PLU officials and supporters publicly endorsed his candidacy.

These activities raise two questions that concern the command of the national army and the integrity of the 2031 general election. They cannot wait, so the Society answers them here.

B. QUESTIONS

3. *Whether PLU is a political organisation within the meaning of section 1 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178), and, if so, whether it operates lawfully?*
4. *Whether it is consistent with the law for General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, a serving military officer, to hold the office of Chairman of PLU?*

C. SUMMARY OF OPINION

5. **PLU is a political organisation operating unlawfully.** Its objects and activities are to influence the political process and to sponsor a named individual for the presidency. It is not registered under the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178). Article 72(2) of the Constitution forbids any organisation to operate as a political party or organisation unless it is registered. PLU is therefore an illegal organisation, and each day it operates is a continuing breach of the Constitution and the Act.

6. **General Muhoozi Kainerugaba is in breach of the Constitution and of two Acts of Parliament.** General Muhoozi Kainerugaba chairs a political organisation. While he is a serving military officer, commanding the Defence Forces, he allows a nationwide campaign to collect endorsements for his own candidacy.

This contravenes Article 208(2) of the Constitution, section 16(1) of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178), and section 97 of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act (Cap. 330). A contravention of section 16(1) is a criminal offence under section 16(2) punishable by a fine not exceeding Uganda Shillings 480,000 or imprisonment for a term of one year or both.

7. **Who must act**

The Defence Forces Council. The Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Council is chaired by the President as Commander-in-Chief and oversees discipline of the army. The Society calls on the Council to enforce military discipline against the Chief of Defence Forces in the terms set out in Part G.

The Electoral Commission (EC). The EC must condemn the PLU for acting as an illegal political organisation. It must demand the suspension of all political activities by PLU until PLU has registered itself as a political party or organisation under the law.

The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The DPP must prosecute the leadership of the PLU for violation of the Political Parties and Organisations Act.

D. FACTS RELIED UPON

8. The Society relies on facts in the public record. They have been reported by the national broadcaster and the national press, and neither PLU nor the Defence Forces has disputed them:
- (a) PLU emerged in 2023 from the "MK Movement", a network formed to promote General Muhoozi Kainerugaba as a successor to the presidency.
 - (b) General Muhoozi Kainerugaba is the serving Chief of Defence Forces. PLU officials publicly identify him as its National Chairman.
 - (c) PLU has a national hierarchy: a National Chairman, National Vice Chairpersons, a Secretary General, regional coordinators, publicity secretaries, and numbered "Patriotic Officers". It plans offices at district, sub-county and parish level.
 - (d) In September 2026 PLU launched a nationwide drive to collect 20 million signatures endorsing its Chairman for the 2031 presidential election. Endorsement registers are held at the PLU Secretariat, at the Chairman's office, and in 146 districts.
 - (e) At its West Nile launch, PLU's regional coordinator spoke of a future "Patriotic League of Uganda government". He also said that "when the time comes, he will have resigned from being a serving army officer." On 20 October 2026, PLU held a rally at Adjumani Leisure Park, where supporters endorsed General Muhoozi Kainerugaba for the 2031 presidency.
 - (f) PLU's members include the Speaker of Parliament, Rt. Hon. Jacob Oboth Oboth, the Deputy Speaker, Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa, and several Cabinet Ministers.
 - (g) PLU is not registered with the Electoral Commission as a political party or political organisation.

E. THE LAW

The Constitution is the supreme law

9. Article 72(2) provides that an organisation shall not operate as a political party or organisation unless it conforms to the principles laid down in the Constitution and is registered. Article 71 sets out those principles, which include a national character and internal democratic governance.

10. Article 208(2) provides:

“The Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces shall be non-partisan, national in character, patriotic, professional, disciplined, productive and subordinate to the civilian authority as established under this Constitution.”

11. Article 98(1) makes the President the Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Forces.

The Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178)

12. Section 1 defines a “political organisation” as:

“any free association or organisation of persons the objects of which include the influencing of the political process or sponsoring a political agenda, whether or not it also seeks to sponsor or offer a platform to a candidate for election to a political office or to participate in the governance of Uganda at any level.”

13. Section 1(2) excludes pressure groups, and civic organisations registered as such under the laws of Uganda.

14. Section 16(1) provides that a member of the Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces shall not:

- (a) be a founder, promoter or other member of a political party or organisation;
- (b) hold office in a political party or organisation;
- (c) speak in public or publish anything involving matters of political party or organisation controversy; or
- (d) engage in canvassing in support of a political party or organisation or of a candidate standing for public election.

Section 16(2) makes a contravention an offence.

The Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces Act (Cap. 330)

15. Section 2(2) restates the command in Article 208(2) that the Defence Forces shall be non-partisan. Section 97 provides:

“A serving officer or militant who desires to seek political office shall first resign or retire from the Defence Forces according to regulations made by the Minister.”

16. The Act also makes conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline a service offence. It establishes the Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces Council, chaired by the President, as the supreme organ responsible for the control and administration of the Defence Forces.

F. ANALYSIS

Question 1: PLU is a political organisation, and an unregistered one

17. The statutory test looks at an organisation's objects, not its label. An organisation is a political organisation if its objects "include" influencing the political process or sponsoring a political agenda. The word "include" is decisive. Influencing politics need not be PLU's only object, only one of them.
18. PLU's conduct meets the test on its own terms. PLU distributes endorsement registers in 146 districts and has set a target of 20 million signatures for its chairman's presidential candidacy. It appoints regional coordinators and publicity secretaries, plans parish offices, and speaks of forming a "PLU government". An organisation that does these things is sponsoring a political agenda. The definition anticipates exactly this, because it applies "whether or not" the organisation also offers a platform to a candidate. PLU does both.
19. PLU's description of itself as a "pressure group" does not survive scrutiny. A pressure group works from outside the contest for power to influence public opinion and government action. It lobbies those who hold office. It does not build a campaign machine to put its own chairman into the highest office in the land. With the Speaker of Parliament, the Deputy Speaker and Cabinet Ministers among its members, PLU is not pressing on government from outside. It is a vehicle inside government, organised for succession to the presidency.

Section 1(2) must also be read consistently with Article 72(2). The pressure group exclusion cannot exempt from registration an organisation that in substance operates as a political organisation. Parliament has no power to authorise what the Constitution forbids.

20. **PLU is not registered.** Article 72(2) is framed as a prohibition: an unregistered organisation "shall not operate". PLU operates every day, in public, with the full apparatus of a party, so it is an illegal organisation. Its endorsement drive, rallies, appointments and regional launches are each acts of an organisation that the Constitution forbids to operate.

Question 2: General Muhoozi Kainerugaba is in breach

21. Section 16(1)(b) of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178) forbids a member of the Defence Forces to hold office in a political organisation. General Muhoozi Kainerugaba holds the highest office in PLU, and that fact alone completes the breach. The facts relevant to section 16(1)(a), (c) and (d) compound it: membership, public political speech, and canvassing in support of a candidate. Here the candidate is the officer himself.
22. Section 97 of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act (Cap. 330) turns on the word "desires". Parliament did not wait for nomination day. The duty to resign or retire arises when the officer desires to seek political office, and it must be met "first", before he begins to pursue that office.

The General chairs an organisation collecting 20 million signatures for his own presidential candidacy and has not disowned the drive. His regional coordinator announces that he will resign "when the time comes". An officer in that position has shown that desire. The coordinator's statement concedes that the rule applies and announces an intention to put off complying with it. Section 97 does not allow compliance to be put off.

23. Article 208(2) binds the Defence Forces as an institution, and it binds them through those who command them. The Chief of Defence Forces is the most senior serving officer in the army, and every officer and militant is subject to his orders. When the commander of the army chairs a political organisation, a soldier in a barracks in Adjumani does not see a non-partisan army. He sees his commander's name on an endorsement register at the district headquarters. An officer who wants to join a rival political cause knows what that choice will mean for his career. Partisanship at the top of the command is partisanship of the institution, and that is precisely what Article 208(2) prohibits.
24. The design of the Constitution leaves no room for doubt. Article 210 gives Parliament the power to regulate the Defence Forces. Yet the Speaker and Deputy Speaker who preside over that Parliament are members of an organisation chaired by the Chief of Defence Forces.
- The army is meant to be subordinate to civilian authority. That principle is turned upside down when the civilian authority signs up under the army commander's political banner.
25. The Society has considered whether Article 208(2) applies only to partisanship in favour of a registered political party. It does not. The Article requires the Defence Forces to be "non-partisan", without qualification. To be partisan is to take sides in the contest for political power. An unregistered organisation campaigning for a presidential candidate is a side in that contest. The breach of Article 208(2) therefore stands whatever the answer to Question 1.
26. The conduct described is also conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline under the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act (Cap. 330). Every other serving officer who has joined or holds office in PLU faces the same liability under section 16 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178).

G. CALL TO ACTION

27. The Society calls on the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Council, under the chairmanship of the President as Commander-in-Chief, to do the following within fourteen (14) days of the date of this opinion:
- (i) direct General Muhoozi Kainerugaba to choose at once between his command and his political ambition. He must either give up the chairmanship of PLU and all association with it, or resign or retire from the Defence Forces under section 97 of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act (Cap. 330);
 - (ii) begin disciplinary proceedings over the conduct set out in this opinion;
 - (iii) issue a written directive to all serving officers and militants that section 16 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178) prohibits membership of PLU, office in it, or canvassing for it, and require those who hold office in PLU to give it up; and
 - (iv) publish the decisions taken.

28. The Society further calls on the Electoral Commission to use its powers under the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178) against an unregistered organisation operating as a political organisation.

It also calls on the Director of Public Prosecutions to commence prosecutions against the leadership of the PLU for violations of the law. Rule of law means equal application of the law to all. The DPP cannot prosecute for violations of regulations like broadcasting without a license then act helpless when faced with violations of statute underpinned by fundamental constitutional principles like demilitarization of politics.

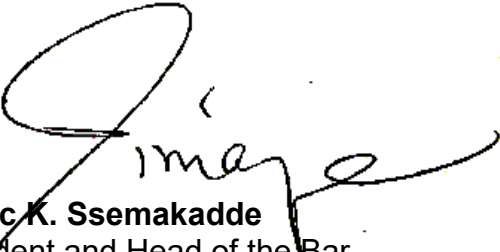
It also calls on the Attorney General, as principal legal adviser to Government under Article 119, to advise Government on these questions without delay.

29. If these bodies fail to act, the Society will consider every available remedy. These include a petition to the Constitutional Court under Article 137 and proceedings under Article 50 of the Constitution to enforce rights and freedoms.

H. CONCLUSION

30. The Constitution did not leave the neutrality of the army to the goodwill of its commanders. It wrote that neutrality into Article 208(2), and Parliament gave it force in section 16 of the Political Parties and Organisations Act (Cap. 178) and section 97 of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act (Cap. 330). These provisions bind the Chief of Defence Forces just as they bind the most junior private. If they do not bind him, they bind no one.

Issued for and on behalf of the ULS Governing Council.



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