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RWENZORI FORUM FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE (RFPJ) STATEMENT ON THE DISCONTINUATION OF CHARGES AGAINST HIS MAJESTY CHARLES WESLEY MUMBERE IREMA-NGOMA AND 217 OTHER PERSONS BY THE GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA

June 14th, 2023

On June 13th, 2023, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) informed the Registrar of the High Court of the Government's decision to end proceedings against His Majesty, King Charles Wesley Mumbere Irema-Ngoma of Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu (OBR) and 217 others following their arrest in November 2016. The King and others were arrested and charged with multiple cases including murder, terrorism, treason, malicious damage to property, among others. Following the arrest, the King was confined in Kampala, Jinja and surrounding areas and effectively barred from travelling to his Kingdom. The protracted judicial process saw more than ten detainees die in detention.

The discontinuation of charges against His Majesty the Omusinga and 217 others is a momentous event that presents a grand opportunity for the Rwenzori region to embark on a new path to peace and reconciliation.

First, many OBR loyalists, supporters and well-wishers within the Rwenzori region and beyond, have for years, looked forward to seeing his Majesty the Omusinga and others regain their freedom. In these years of waiting, the OBR cultural institution has not publicly conducted many of their annual cultural events. Thus, the discontinuation of charges is greatly expected to revivify the public celebration of key cultural events and by extension, facilitate OBR adherents to exercise and realize their cultural rights and freedoms.

Further, the discontinuation of charges will bring hope and joy to families of his Majesty the Omusinga and 217 others and consequently, help start a process of rekindling shuttered family dreams, hope and identity.

Using his influence, good will from his followers and friends within and outside of the Rwenzori region, His Majesty the Omusinga is greatly expected to be part of the peace and reconciliation process in the region by among others, inspiring hope and unity within his followers, that have for long not met and felt the physical presence of their leader.

On this occasion, we appeal to OBR adherents and all people of the Rwenzori region to remain calm as we wait for the next steps following the discontinuation of proceedings against His Majesty the Omusinga and 217 others. We also appeal to all leaders in the Rwenzori region to contribute to processes that help consolidate cultural and non-political mandates of OBR and other cultural institutions in the Rwenzori region in line with Article 246 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution (as amended) and the 2011 Institution of Traditional or Cultural Leaders Act.

Lastly, we appeal to the Government of Uganda to consolidate her Transitional Justice (TJ) efforts by among others; Accelerating the implementation of 2019 TJ Policy; Enacting the TJ Act to make TJ more justiciable and; Paying more attention to the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of 2016 violence and other schemes of violence that have before, characterized the Rwenzori region as one way of fostering sustainable peace and reconciliation.

We heartily wish His Majesty, the Omusinga and 217 others, good life and safe return home.

Tuhaise Francis

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tuhaise Francis', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Executive Director/RFPJ