

#STOPEACOP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday 7th, 2023

StopEACOP Activists Celebrate Charges Dropped, Calls to Stop EACOP Continue

Kampala, Uganda — The StopEACOP Coalition celebrates news that charges have been dropped against nine courageous Ugandan students and youth activists who faced arrest and have been in and out of court for over a year simply for exercising their democratic right to peacefully protest the controversial East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP).

In October 2022, these students held a nonviolent demonstration supporting the EU Parliament's resolution, raising concerns about EACOP's human rights abuses and environmental destruction. Their unwavering commitment despite facing criminalization shows the power of peaceful resistance.

Nonetheless, their release occurs within a growing clampdown on environmental defenders in Uganda. A recent [report](#) by Human Rights Watch extensively documents the severe crackdown that activists confront when raising questions about the EACOP, marked by arbitrary arrests and an oppressive atmosphere of dissent perpetuated by the Ugandan government supporting the contentious pipeline. This HRW report aligns with multiple communications from the UN Special Rapporteur expressing concerns regarding human rights violations associated with the project.

Despite being repeatedly alerted about the harassment and criminalization of environmental defenders raising their voices against EACOP, and despite its legal duty to prevent human rights violations associated with its activities, Total is stubbornly going ahead with this oil project.

This worrying trend violates basic democratic freedoms and demands action. Ugandans have a right to express their opinion on the kind of development they want under their constitution, and asking for an alternative to the controversial EACOP pipeline is not criminal.

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These students' unwavering commitment, despite intimidation, shows the power of nonviolent resistance. They represent the hope and resilience of a generation committed to a sustainable Uganda that invests in its people, not fossil fuel pipelines that fuel the climate crisis. Their release proves the power of solidarity to overcome repression.

We applaud these courageous young activists, but our mission is far from over. The charges were an effort to silence critics of the pipeline. We urge all stakeholders, especially banks and insurance companies considering funding this project, to withdraw their support due to the significant risks involved and the harm it poses to people, nature, and the environment. The world is paying attention, and our voices will not be silenced

Quotes:

"We celebrate the dismissal of charges against these students as a clear testament to the arbitrary and unjust nature of their arrests. This moment serves as a crucial reminder to Ugandan authorities that activists, especially young people, are legitimate stakeholders in the discourse on environmental and social governance. The right to peaceful protest is not a crime but a fundamental human right, and it is imperative that all individuals— including those previously detained and the many others still facing harassment—be allowed to exercise this right without fear of further criminalisation," said Zaki Mamdoo, StopEACOP Campaign Coordinator.

"We are happy that the court has pronounced itself on this matter. The ruling of this matter lays a precedent that Ugandans have the right to express their views on the kind of development they want for their country," said Brighton Aryampa, Chief Executive Officer, Youth for Green Communities (YGC).

"We applaud the release of these students and commend the Ugandan and global

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community for their tireless efforts. This victory highlights the importance of national and international solidarity in protecting human rights defenders operating in repressed civic spaces," said Diana Nabiruma, Senior Communications Officer, AFIEGO.

"We express our sincere gratitude to all stakeholders who tirelessly worked to ensure our justice, with special appreciation to our dedicated and capable lawyer, Counsel Wanda. The State orchestrated this case to obstruct our efforts in mobilizing students and youths for direct actions against EACOP. However, these baseless charges have only served to invigorate our resolve. Consequently, we call upon the state to also drop the charges against the four student activists who were arrested and detained on September 15, 2023," said Ntambazi Imuran Java, one of the arrested students.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Abiud Onyach
StopEACOP Digital and Communications Associate
abiud.onyach@350.org | info@stopeacop.net

Brighton Aryampa
Youth for Green Communities (YGC)
aryampa.brighton@gmail.com

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Notes to Editors:

#StopEACOP is a global campaign against constructing the East African Crude Oil pipeline (EACOP). This proposed 1,443-kilometer heated pipeline will transport oil from Hoima, Uganda, to the port of Tanga in Tanzania. An alliance of local groups, communities, and African and global organisations leads the campaign. The #StopEACOP Coalition has been calling for a stop to the proposed pipeline and associated oil fields at Tilenga and Kingfisher. The #StopEACOP campaign is gathering momentum, building pressure on the remaining supporters and financiers of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline. AEGIS London, Arch Capital Group Ltd and Britam Holdings recently announced they would not offer the project insurance coverage. So far, [27 major banks](#) and [23 major \(re\)insurers](#) have ruled out support for the pipeline. Some key financial institutions yet to commit to not funding EACOP include ICBC and Standard Bank.