

#STOP EACOP

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PRESS RELEASE

Demand for the Immediate Release of Activists Arrested for Protesting the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)

Kampala, 12th June 2023 – Members of the StopEACOP campaign, together with concerned citizens and human rights advocates, strongly condemn yesterday's arrest and detention of four activists who were peacefully protesting against the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP). We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Bob Barigye, Mutesi Zarika, Naruwada Shamim, and Nalusiba Phionah, who have been unjustly held in police custody at the Kampala Central Police Station for one night.

The arrest and detention of these individuals violate their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The four activists have since been charged with inciting violence, yet the information in the public domain, including videos and pictures, shows the police violently arresting people who were peaceful in their protest. The EACOP project, with its associated environmental and social concerns, has sparked widespread debate and resistance among frontline communities in Uganda hence the demonstration yesterday.

As the world faces the urgent need to address climate change and transition to renewable energy sources, it is essential to reevaluate the pursuit of new fossil fuel projects. We call upon the government of Uganda and Tanzania as well as the project proponents: TotalEnergies, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) and financial institutions that are thinking of providing financing or insurance to this controversial project to reconsider for the sake of the frontline communities already suffering the negative impacts of this project and prioritise sustainable development by shifting their focus towards renewable energy alternatives, which can provide long-term benefits for both the environment and local communities.

This comes barely two weeks after Bagiire Sharif was arrested after he took part in a protest with a number of students who had organised themselves to oppose the controversial EACOP project. Considered alongside previous arrests of activists

#STOP EACOP

opposing EACOP, the detention of these peaceful protestors forms part of a disturbing pattern of intimidation and suppression carried out on those who voice their opposition to this controversial project.

“The arrests of these activists are a clear attempt to silence dissent and suppress opposition to the EACOP. We call upon the international community and civil society organisations to join us in condemning these arrests and demanding justice for those detained.” **said Zaki Mamdoo, StopEACOP Campaign Coordinator**

“It is not a crime to voice opposition to the controversial EACOP project or to advocate for the government and project proponents to explore alternative, sustainable solutions. Peaceful protest and dialogue are fundamental pillars of a democratic society, and these rights must be protected and upheld.” **said Samuel Okulony, Director Environment Governance Institute Uganda**

"Our colleague Bob and three women are once again in danger because the people who hurt the environment and destroy communities will do anything to keep making profits. Arrests and threats against activists will not stop us from fighting for Mother Nature. We want the activists to be set free without any conditions, since there is no case against them. The government of Uganda must respect the right to protest." **said Brian Atuheire, Director AIFE - Uganda**

“Activists are not Terrorists. The government and oil companies must stop the witch hunt on climate activists and human rights defenders, and instead, listen to the message in their call and transition to clean energy for the wellbeing of all Ugandans.” **said Kayinga Muddu Yisito, Network Coordinator, Community Transformation Foundation Network (COTFONE), Masaka, Uganda.**

"We condemn in the strongest terms possible the continued intimidation and arrests of activists protesting against the East African Crude Oil Pipeline. These activists were exercising their democratic right to peacefully protest against a project that they believe will have devastating consequences for the environment and the people of Uganda and beyond. The Ugandan government should immediately release the arrested activists and drop all charges against them." **said Charity Migwi, Africa Regional Campaigner at 350.org.**

#STOPEACOP

Media Contact:

Abiud Onyach

#StopEACOP Digital and Communications Associate

abiud.onyach@350.org | info@stopeacop.net

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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.