

Press release

23rd September 2009

Kampala: **Dismissal of politicised trial of HRDs in western Uganda**

After nearly two years of trial the Tweraneho Listeners Club trial has today finally been dismissed marking a positive step for freedom of expression and the media in Uganda in what many have described as a politicised case.

The case against the Tweraneho Listeners Club, a local human rights organisation working in Western Uganda, has dragged on since January 2008 when five of its members were arrested after they took part in a weekly local radio talk show in which they criticized the district's political leadership and discussed cases of corruption and abuse of office. The program moderator, Gonza William of Life FM, was also arrested.

The six accused had been charged with two offences: incitement to violence and defamation and were acquitted on both charges. The Court today found that the prosecution had failed to provide sufficient evidence to support the charges and in its ruling stated insufficient evidence was adduced to show that the comments made during the radio show incited violence. The Court further went on to dismiss the second charge when the Prosecution failed to present the material evidence necessary to prove charges of defamation.

“In light of recent restrictions on freedom of the media and of expression in Uganda and what may be described as the politicized nature of this trial, the acquittal of the six accused today is a positive development. We hope that this case will serve to re-enforce freedom of expression in Uganda and will help to bring an end to on-going harassment of the media” says Mr. Hassan Shire Sheikh, Executive Director of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP).

EHAHRDP has followed the case closely. Today's hearing, 23rd September 2009, was observed by David Kaggwa, EHAHRDP Lawyer.

For more information please contact David Kaggwa, EHAHRDP Lawyer on + 256 772 474 695, or Laetitia Bader, Human Rights Officer at EHAHRDP on +256 775 141 756 or at advocacy@defenddefenders.org.

