



**CARTOONISTS
RIGHTS**



**Freedom
Cartoonists**
DESSINS POUR LA LIBERTÉ

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Uganda : editorial cartoonist Jimmy Spire Ssentongo's freedom of expression under threat

Cartooning for Peace, Cartoonists Rights and Freedom Cartoonist Foundation express their deep concern over the legal proceedings brought against Ugandan editorial cartoonist Jimmy Spire Ssentongo (alias Spire), known for his unwavering and outspoken advocacy for good governance and anti-corruption. This incident sheds a harsh light on the state of freedom of expression in Uganda, and will be closely monitored.

Recipient of the 2026 Koffi Annan Courage in Cartooning Award presented by the Geneva - based Freedom Cartoonists Foundation, Spire is being sued for defamation by Kampala International University (KIU) - a private university owned by a stalwart supporter of the ruling party.

Many internet users shared their experiences of KIU's abusive practices with Spire so that he could highlight them on social media (exorbitant late fees, failure to pay social security dues for staff, tax fraud, silencing students, quality of education etc.). Spire duly raised these issues on his X account.

A High Court Registrar granted a long interim injunction prohibiting Spire from publishing any "unsubstantiated" information about the university. This injunction was issued even before he was informed of the defamation lawsuit filed against him. The university was also granted a temporary injunction, disregarding Spire's objections over violation of his freedom of expression and right to put public institutions to scrutiny. Spire's appeal against the injunction has not even been considered.

On March 18, 2026, Spire denounced questionable practices at KIU, based on a close familial experience [he shared on X](#) with available concrete evidence, while also posting [critical cartoons](#). This personal statement led to Spire being prosecuted for contempt of court. Convicted of contempt without considering the truth of his substantiated evidence, he was ordered to pay a fine of 10 million Ugandan shillings (2,686 USD) and 20 million shillings (5,372 USD) in damages to KIU, failing payment of which he would be jailed for three months. On August 6, his request for a stay of execution was denied.

Fortunately, Spire benefited from a viral online support campaign. Members of the public swiftly raised sufficient money to cover the fines, saving him from being taken into custody. Throughout this campaign, Spire continued to publish [editorial cartoons critical of his country's justice system](#).

Still facing defamation charges, Spire has appealed his conviction for contempt of court.