



Chambers of the Chief Justice

SUPREME COURT OF UGANDA

Plot 2, The Square High Court Building
P. O. Box 7085, Kampala Uganda

IN ANY CORRESPONDENCE ON
THIS SUBJECT PLEASE QUOTE NO. CJ/C.7

3rd August 2021

CIRCULAR

The Hon. The Deputy Chief Justice

The Hon. The Principal Judge

The Hon. Justices of Supreme Court

The Hon. Justices of Court of Appeal/Constitutional Court

The Hon. Judges of High Court

The Chief Registrar

The Permanent Secretary/Secretary to The Judiciary

The Registrars, Deputy Registrars and Assistant Registrars

The Chief Magistrates

The Magistrates Grade I

The Magistrates Grade II

All Staff of the Judiciary

REVISED CONTINGENCY MEASURES BY THE JUDICIARY TO PREVENT AND MITIGATE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

COGNIZANT OF the earlier Guidelines issued by the Chief Justice on 19th March 2020, as modified by the ones issued on 26th March, 29th April, 5th and 27th May, 6th and 29th June, 28th July 2020, as well as those issued on 29th January, 7th and 21st June, 2021, which are all still in force; and

CONSIDERING the reported decline in Covid-19 infections in the country, and the need to render effective Justice to the people of Uganda;

PURSUANT to the powers conferred upon the Chief Justice by Article 133 of the Constitution;

AND IN LINE with the Directives issued by **H.E.** the President on **30th July 2021**, for prevention and mitigation of the spread of COVID-19;

I HEREBY issue these **Revised Guidelines** which take effect from the **3rd Day of August, 2021**.

A: Stepping-up Court operations to 20% Staff attendance

1. All Courts and Departments are hereby directed to immediately scale up operations to **20%** staff physical presence and ensure that only critical staff appear to attend to the Court/office business on a daily basis.
2. Registrars, Magistrates and Heads of Departments are required to update the staff attendance rotas for each Court and Office to ensure that the staff work in rotation with a view to avoid crowding courts, registries and offices.
3. All staff must continue to strictly observe the Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedures as have been issued from time to time by the President of Uganda, the Ministry of Health and the Chief Justice.
4. Whenever practicable, virtual hearing of cases should be adhered to; including insisting on written submissions, use of e-mail and other modes of online communication, on-line delivery of Judgments and audio-visual hearings;

5. Presiding Judicial Officials must supervise Court operations and ensure that the Court set-up and attendance is in line with the approved Covid-19 preventive SOPs.
6. Conferences, workshops and seminars shall not exceed 20 participants until further notice. Virtual meetings are recommended in the present circumstances and Judicial Officers and Staff are urged to adopt the same.

B: Hearing of Civil and Criminal cases

7. Courts should resume the hearing of both civil and criminal cases but under strict observance of Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedures and these guidelines.
8. Execution proceedings and processes may resume, except evictions, arrests and detention of Judgment Debtors.
9. Judicial Officers and staff, except those on the weekly duty rota, are encouraged to continue operating from home, save where duty requires their physical attendance at the Court.
10. Judicial Officers should continue to write and deliver Judgments both physically and virtually whichever is appropriate in the circumstances of each case.
11. The Guidelines issued on 19th January 2021 on the hearing of Civil and Criminal matters remain in force, subject to any modifications, contained herein.
12. All Judicial Officers should cause-list not more than 5 cases per day to avoid crowds within the Court premises.

13. Plea bargain sessions in both the High Court and Magistrates Court hereby resume. Each Court will determine the number of cases to handle per day upon discussion with key stakeholders like Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions, Prisons, Police and Advocates among others.

C: Hearing of Election Petitions and Applications

14. The Hon. The Principal Judge will issue hearing schedules for Election Petitions by the High Court Circuits and Divisions, commencing on 16th August, 2021.

15. All Courts shall, where possible, establish a temporary separate space at the Court where excess persons or those whose cases were fixed at a later time, may be seated, in order to promote social distancing and observance of Covid-19 SOPs.

16. The sitting positions in each Court Hall should be conspicuously demarcated following the social distancing rules.

17. Only parties to the case (s), their advocates and specifically summoned witnesses shall attend Court.

18. Cases should be cause-listed for specific times, one after the other and a witness waiting area should be arranged.

19. In cases where parties and advocates exceed 10 in a single election petition the trial Judge shall conduct the trial using Audio-visual facilities or use open spaces at Court premises where possible.

D: Participation of the Media

20. The Media interested in covering Election Petition proceedings shall be accredited and guided by the respective Court Registrars in consultation with the Public Relations Officer to ensure the coverage of Court proceedings is done in an orderly manner.
21. All journalists attending Court must comply with the SOPs on mitigation of spread of COVID-19 as set by the Ministry of Health.

E: Modification of the Guidelines

22. These Guidelines are in addition to the other Guidelines previously issued, which remain in force, subject to any modifications subsequently issued.
23. All Judicial and Support Staff are reminded to follow and observe the Presidential Directives issued on **30th of July 2021**.
24. These Guidelines may be amended from time to time in line with the National Health Policy and Guidelines.

Dated at **Kampala**, this **3rd day of August, 2021**.



Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny - Dollo
CHIEF JUSTICE