

Uganda's Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026

From Draft to Law: A Full Account

A comprehensive synthesis of EML's public survey findings, stakeholder voices intelligence, and institutional submissions — tracing Uganda's most contested piece of legislation through its 20-day journey from tabling to passage, and examining what the amended law now contains.

318

Survey respondents

51/53

Groups rejected the original Bill

87%

Of Bill amended before passage

06

Institutional submissions reviewed



May 2026

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About Evidence and Methods Lab

Evidence and Methods Lab (EML) is a civic tech initiative that focuses on simplifying, visualising, and sharing information, as well as collating evidence through measurement. Working across the thematic areas of public accountability and anti-corruption, human rights, conflict and violence prevention, and climate change, EML seeks to break barriers in accessing information by making it simple and easily understood by various audiences.

EML works closely with funders and partners to expand its reach and ensure civic involvement — continuing its work in informing policy-making, enhancing public discourse, and improving service delivery in Uganda. This report is produced under EML's WeShapeGov initiative, which focuses on civic engagement and evidence-based participation in legislative and governance processes.

The findings documented in this report — including EML's public survey, the curation and analysis of formal institutional submissions, and the comprehensive before-and-after legislative analysis — represents EML's approach to making complex policy processes accessible, evidence-based, and open to the public.



The Bill That Alarmed Uganda

On 15 April 2026, State Minister for Internal Affairs Hon. David Muhoozi tabled the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 in Parliament. The Bill's stated purpose — to protect Uganda from undue foreign influence — was not itself controversial. What made the Bill immediately alarming was how it proposed to achieve that purpose: through provisions so sweeping, so vaguely worded, and so severe in their penalties that they would have captured ordinary citizens, professional bodies, cultural institutions, diaspora families, tour operators, and religious organisations in their net.

Within days of tabling, an extraordinary coalition of voices raised the alarm simultaneously and independently: legal scholars concluded the drafting was unconstitutional; the Bank of Uganda calculated the economic costs; traditional institutions documented how their own operations would be criminalised; and professional bodies demonstrated that routine client work — a Kampala architect accepting a commission from a Ugandan family in London — would become a criminal offence. Parliament set a 24 April deadline for public submissions. What arrived was one of the most forensically argued civic responses to proposed legislation in recent Ugandan history.

20 Years

Maximum prison sentence
in the original Bill

UGX 4 Bn

Maximum fine for non-
compliant banks per period

UGX 400M

Annual foreign funding cap before
Ministerial approval (~USD 106,000)

WHAT THE ORIGINAL BILL CONTAINED

The original Bill: classified Ugandan citizens abroad as “foreigners”; required Cabinet approval for any foreign-funded entity operating in health, education, or water; gave the Minister of Internal Affairs unchecked power to declare any person a foreigner and revoke registrations without cause; imposed UGX 4 billion fines on banks for each period of non-compliance; required banks to submit monthly reports of all foreign transactions; created the crime of “economic sabotage” carrying 20 years’ imprisonment for anyone who “publishes information or participates in any act that weakens or damages the economic system or viability of the country”; and made it a criminal offence to receive more than UGX 400M from foreign sources in a year without prior written ministerial approval.

INTRODUCED BY: Hon. David Muhoozi, State Minister for Internal Affairs, under the authority of President Museveni. Paradoxically, President Museveni himself later published a 4-page public statement stating: “That is not the Bill I initiated.”



Twenty Days That Shaped the Bill

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill moved faster than any legislation of comparable scope in recent memory. From tabling to passage took exactly 20 days. In that window, an extraordinary sequence of events unfolded — each one narrowing the space between the Bill as originally drafted and anything Parliament could defensibly pass.

13 April 2026 Kingdom of Buganda Files First Major Submission

The Buganda Kingdom submits its formal concerns to the Attorney General before the Bill even completes first reading. The letter details how the Kingdom's internationally-funded programmes in health, education, and cultural heritage would be captured by the "agent of foreigners" definition.

15 April 2026 Bill Tabled for First Reading

State Minister Hon. David Muhoozi introduces the Bill. Parliament sets 24 April as the public submissions deadline — nine days for Uganda's institutions to respond.

20 April 2026 AUTO Submits 29-Page Sectoral Impact Assessment

Association of Uganda Tour Operators files the most comprehensive sectoral analysis — signed by Chairperson Ms. Civy Tumusime. It identifies six specific legal ambiguities that would make ordinary tourism transactions criminal offences, and documents the threat to Uganda's USD 1.7 billion tourism sector.

21 April 2026 Diaspora Webinar — 465 Participants, 6,000+ Views in 24 Hours

Uganda Global Forum convenes a public webinar attracting 465 live participants across 31 countries. A follow-up survey is circulated through diaspora networks globally. "We cannot be defined as foreigners elsewhere and also at home. Are we stateless?" — Diaspora participant, Zambia

23 April 2026 IRCU Joint Interfaith Statement Signed

Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda signs the IRCU press statement on behalf of four interfaith legal partner bodies — the Muslim Center for Law and Justice, Uganda Catholic Lawyers' Association, Uganda Christian Lawyers' Fraternity, and the Uganda Muslim Lawyers' Association — declaring the Bill a constitutional threat.

24 April 2026 — 51 of 53 groups reject the Bill Public Consultation Closes

Of 53 groups appearing before the Joint Committee, 51 reject the Bill outright. Only 2 express qualified support. This near-unanimous rejection represents one of the most lopsided civic consultation outcomes in Uganda's recent legislative history.

27–28 April 2026 Bank of Uganda Governor Testifies Before the Joint Committee

BoU Governor Atingi-Ego delivers expert testimony warning the Bill risks introducing "voluntary shocks" that could undermine Uganda's financial stability. Her submission identifies risks to USD 3.4 billion in FDI, USD 1.5 billion in diaspora remittances, and Uganda's FATF compliance status. "A country without reserves is not sovereign."

29 April 2026 Uganda Law Society Demands Parliament Halt All Proceedings

ULS Vice President Asiimwe Anthony files a formal letter declaring the Certificate of Financial Implications "manifestly unlawful, void, and of no legal effect" — in violation of Section 74 of the Public Finance Management Act.

30 April 2026 — Turning Point President Museveni Publicly Disowns the Bill

President Museveni publishes a 4-page statement on X (@KagutaMuseveni) disowning the Bill as drafted. He directs that it be revised to exclude FDI, remittances, church donations, private family transfers, and all legitimate business transactions. "That is not the Bill I initiated." — President Museveni

4 May 2026 Citizens' Coalition Files Final Appeal

A coalition of civil society organisations files a final appeal urging Parliament to reject even the amended Bill, arguing that retained provisions — particularly Clause 13's Economic Sabotage offence — remain unconstitutional.

5 May 2026 — Passage Parliament Passes the Heavily Amended Bill

Parliament passes the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 in its amended form. Hon. Abdallah Kiwanuka (NUP) estimates 87% of the original Bill was changed. The NRM Parliamentary Caucus had met that morning at the Office of the President Conference Hall and resolved to support passage as a bloc.



What Ugandans Said: The EML Public Survey

EML conducted a public survey on the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026, distributed via LinkedIn, X/Twitter, WhatsApp, and the EML website. The survey ran during April–May 2026 — spanning the active legislative consultation period — and collected 318 total responses. Across every question, the findings were unambiguous: overwhelming majorities opposed the Bill's core provisions.

318

Total responses

Apr–May 2026

Data collection window

5

Distribution channels

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

35–49 age group = 51% · Male 60%, Female 37% · Central Uganda 51% · NGO/Civil Society 22%, Private Sector 24%. How respondents first learned of the Bill: Social media 69%, TV/Radio 42%, Newspaper 27%, Word of mouth 12%, Workplace 9%, Parliament/Government 7%, First heard via this survey 3%.

KEY SURVEY RESULTS

Oppose or strongly oppose the Bill's stated aim	85%
Describe the 20-year sentence as "far too harsh"	88%
Reject classification of diaspora citizens as foreigners	96%
Find the UGX 400M cap too low or want no cap at all	92%
Expect a very negative economic impact from the Bill	89%
Want Parliament to reject the Bill entirely	66%
Want Parliament to pause for broader consultation	25%
Report concern level 4 or 5 out of 5	91%

SELECTED VERBATIM RESPONSES

"People are now doing remote work and paying taxes already — why make it complex for them to receive money they have worked hard for? The Bill doesn't distinguish between a political operative and a graphic designer in Kampala receiving a client payment from London."

Business Owner, Male, 35–49, Central Uganda

"This Bill would make my organisation unable to operate. We receive grants from international foundations for climate work. We are not agents of any foreign government — we are Ugandans trying to protect Ugandan forests."

NGO Worker, Female, 25–34

"The core idea is sound — it is the drafting that caused problems. I support regulating foreign interference in elections, not foreign funding of health clinics."

NUP Member, Male, 25–34, Central Uganda



Stakeholder Voices: Who Said What

The Sovereignty Bill generated one of the most vocal cross-partisan public responses to any Ugandan legislation in recent memory. The President, opposition leaders, the central bank governor, lawyers, the Kingdom of Buganda, religious leaders, international rights bodies, and ordinary citizens all weighed in — often arriving at the same conclusion from very different starting points.

President Museveni — 30 April 2026 · @KagutaMuseveni on X

Published a 4-page statement publicly disowning the Bill as drafted. He specifically directed exclusion of: foreign direct investment, remittances from Ugandans abroad, donations to churches and mosques, private family transfers, and all normal commercial business transactions. This single statement caused the NRM Caucus to reverse direction and support sweeping amendments.

"That is not the Bill I initiated. The Bill I requested was narrow — to deal with foreign interference in Uganda's political affairs. What has been drafted goes far beyond that."

President Museveni, 30 April 2026

Bank of Uganda — Testimony to Parliament, 27–28 April 2026

Governor Atingi-Ego warned Parliament the Bill risked introducing "voluntary shocks" — regulatory fragmentation that could trigger capital flight, exchange rate volatility, and higher interest rates. The BoU's expert submission identified USD 3.4 billion in FDI at risk, USD 1.5 billion in diaspora remittances potentially disrupted, and raised the prospect of FATF grey-listing.

"A country without reserves is not sovereign."

BoU Governor Atingi-Ego, testimony to Parliament, April 2026

Uganda Law Society — Public Statement, 29 April 2026

"The Uganda Law Society considers this Bill a constitutional coup. It grants the Executive powers that belong to the courts, strips citizens of due process, and creates criminal liability for acts that are neither harmful nor intentional. We demand Parliament halt proceedings immediately."

Uganda Law Society — Public Statement · 29 April 2026

Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine)

"The proposed law seeks to silence civil society and opposition support networks — particularly given the broad scope of the 'agent of foreigner' and 'economic sabotage' provisions."

Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine) — NUP Presidential Candidate, as reported by Watchdog Uganda, April 2026

Other Voices

"This bill is stupid and ridiculous to the point that it will collapse the entire economy. It criminalises the act of receiving money from abroad, which is what millions of Ugandans depend on every month just to survive."

Agather Atuhaire — Human Rights Activist · AFP Wire Report, Africanews, 1 May 2026

"We need to make this Bill less toxic — or better still, shelve it. The drafting has created a situation where we are trying to protect Uganda from foreign influence but we have drafted a law that would punish Ugandans for being Ugandan."

Mwesigwa Rukutana — Senior NRM Member of Parliament · The Observer Uganda, April 2026



"From Russia to Nicaragua to Ethiopia, these laws are never about protecting the people. They are about protecting governments from the people. The historical pattern is undeniable."

Job Kijja — Initiative for Economic Development and Accountability (IDEA) · Press Statement, April 2026

Opposition MPs — Parliamentary Record (Hansard)

"This Bill is worse than the Security Laws Amendment Act. At least that Bill targeted persons. This one targets ideas — the idea of receiving money, the idea of working with someone who lives abroad."

Hon. Wilfred Niwagaba — NUP, Ndorwa East

"Every Ugandan lawyer who represents a foreign client is a potential criminal. Every journalist who takes a grant from an international foundation could face 20 years. This is the architecture of silence."

Hon. Medard Sseggona — NUP, Busiro East

"I estimate 87% of this Bill has been changed. What has been passed is effectively a new piece of legislation — yet Parliament has not given it the scrutiny a new Bill deserves."

Hon. Abdallah Kiwanuka — NUP, on Passage Day, 5 May 2026

Government & Pro-Bill Voices

Hon. Denis Hamson Obua, Government Chief Whip: "We were colonised by the British; the UK has similar legislation. We're not reinventing the wheel." · Hon. David Muhoozi on passage day: "The amendments are intended to harmonise the definitions with the scope of the Bill to limit the application of the law to only agents of foreigners." · On the morning of 5 May 2026, the NRM Parliamentary Caucus met at the Office of the President Conference Hall and formally resolved to support passage as a unified bloc.

"The Bill would create a chilling effect on civil society, freedom of expression, and assembly. Its provisions are so broad they capture legitimate human rights work."

HRW — Oryem Nyeko, Uganda Researcher · 23 April 2026



Institutions That Spoke to Parliament

Of the 53 organisations that appeared before Parliament's Joint Committee, 51 rejected the Bill outright. EML analyzed six formal written submissions of exceptional depth and legal rigour — with officially stamped cover letters. Each institution approached the same Bill from a different vantage point, yet arrived at remarkably consistent conclusions about its dangers.

01 · Uganda Law Society

STRONGLY OPPOSED FILED 29 APRIL 2026 SIGNED: VP ASIIMWE ANTHONY

The ULS launched a procedural challenge going beyond opposing the Bill's content — they demanded Parliament halt all proceedings because the Certificate of Financial Implications dated 15 April 2026 was “manifestly unlawful, void, and of no legal effect.”

- The Certificate violated Section 74 of the PFMA. It presented a single aggregate figure of Shs. 29.029 billion without itemisation, methodology, assumptions, or distinction between capital and recurrent expenditure.
- Six revenue-generating mechanisms were concealed: registration and renewal fees; UGX 1 billion non-registration fines; fund forfeitures; UGX 4 billion bank penalties; criminal fines to the Consolidated Fund; and miscellaneous clause fines.
- The Bank of Uganda's expert testimony was wholly ignored, violating Article 162 of the Constitution protecting the BoU's technical advisory independence.
- The economic impact assessment was a restatement of policy objectives, not genuine analysis. It omitted: 20,000–50,000 NGO job losses; USD 3.4 billion FDI at risk; USD 1.5 billion remittances disrupted; FATF grey-listing risk.

“The Certificate is manifestly unlawful, void, and of no legal effect. Pending reissuance of a compliant Certificate, we demand that Parliament halt any further consideration of the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026.”

Asiimwe Anthony, Vice President · Uganda Law Society · 29 April 2026

02 · Kingdom of Buganda

OPPOSED — SOUGHT AMENDMENTS FILED 13 APRIL 2026 TO: ATTORNEY GENERAL

The Kingdom of Buganda receives grants from UNAIDS, UNESCO, and USAID for health, education, agriculture, and cultural heritage. Under the original Bill, the Kingdom itself, the Kabaka Foundation, and the Nnaabagereka Development Foundation would all be classified as “agents of foreigners” in respect of every internationally-funded programme.

- Amend the definition of “Foreigner.” Under Article 11 of the Constitution, a Ugandan citizen abroad does not lose citizenship by virtue of residence. Classifying the diaspora as foreigners is constitutionally incoherent.
- Preserve Traditional Institutions' right to public advocacy. Any engagement by Kingdom officials on land rights, education, or health — if the Kingdom received any foreign support — could be prosecuted under Clauses 7 & 8.
- Clause 13 must require proven criminal intent (*mens rea*). A Kingdom official raising concerns about a government project's economic impact could be prosecuted for “economic sabotage” without any requirement to prove intent.
- The UGX 400M cap is unrealistic for Traditional Institutions whose development programmes routinely receive more than UGX 400M from international partners.
- Exempt Traditional Institutions from Clause 14 registration. Requiring the Kingdom, Kabaka Foundation, and every affiliated entity to separately register biannually would cripple the Kingdom's operations.
- Fund source declarations should be filed confidentially. Clause 21 as drafted would expose sensitive donor relationships.



"To label such contributions as 'foreign funding' and to designate family members back home as 'agents of foreigners' is a profound injustice."

Kingdom of Buganda Submission to the Attorney General · 13 April 2026

03 · Inter-Religious Council of Uganda

OPPOSED — SOUGHT REVISIONS SIGNED 23 APRIL 2026 SIGNED: APOSTLE DR. JOSEPH SERWADDA

Co-signed by the Muslim Center for Law and Justice, Uganda Catholic Lawyers' Association, Uganda Christian Lawyers' Fraternity, and Uganda Muslim Lawyers' Association. The IRCU noted a legislative irony: the 2025 Anti-Money Laundering Act amendment had relieved churches and NGOs from mandatory financial reporting — the Sovereignty Bill would entirely reverse that progress.

- The Bill usurps sovereignty from the people, violating Article 1 of the Constitution.
- Clause 14 imposes an extra and unnecessary registration burden on faith institutions already registered with KCCA, URSB, FIA, NGO Bureau, Law Council, URA, NSSF, and Interpol.
- Penalties are "excessive and tantamount to gross violation" of constitutional rights, effectively positioning all offences as capital-level offences incompatible with Uganda's sentencing standards.

IRCU's 8 Recommendations:

- R1: Revise vague definitions: "foreign agent," "foreigner," "economic sabotage," "public interest"
- R2: Limit excessive Ministerial powers — specifically unchecked discretion to register/deregister organisations
- R3: Strike provisions criminalising diaspora fundraising for local development investment
- R4: Strengthen FIA, Bank of Uganda, and NGO Bureau rather than creating a new registration department
- R5: Promote private-public partnerships rather than stifling NGO and faith-based development engagement
- R6: Establish inter-ministerial tribunal for dispute resolution before court proceedings
- R7: Align all punishments to Constitutional guarantees and Uganda's sentencing guidelines
- R8: Do not restrict funding amounts — require proof of source and purpose through existing oversight bodies

"It is our prophetic call as religious leaders to guide the nation and be a voice for the voiceless. The IRCU rejects the Bill in its current form due to possible Constitutional violations, including the possibility of the Bill shrinking civic space and endangering both civil and political rights."

Apostle Dr. Joseph Serwadda · Co-Chairperson, IRCU Council of Presidents · 23 April 2026



04 · Association of Uganda Tour Operators (AUTO)

OPPOSED — SOUGHT SECTORAL EXEMPTIONS SIGNED: MS. CIVY TUMUSIME, CHAIRPERSON

The most comprehensive sectoral analysis submitted — 29 pages, clause-by-clause. AUTO's economic frame was stark: tourism earned Uganda USD 1.7 billion in 2025 (1.65 million visitors), with a government target of USD 4 billion annually by 2029/30.

- Who qualifies as an “agent of a foreigner” in ordinary tourism? A Ugandan tour operator receives payment from a London-based agent they contracted — making the Ugandan the principal. The Bill **would** classify them as “agent of a foreigner” based purely on the direction of financial flows.
- When exactly is ministerial approval required? Tourism runs on staged payments — deposits months ahead, instalment schedules, rolling contracts. Every ambiguity is an operational paralysis risk.
- Does the UGX 400M cap capture ordinary safari revenue? A mid-sized operator running gorilla trekking and safari packages exceeds USD 106,000 in a single peak season.
- Banks face UGX 4 billion fines for processing international tourism payments. Banks would conservatively delay all international transactions — breaking time-sensitive booking cycles.
- “Administrative indeterminacy”: no statutory deadline for approval decisions; no interim approval mechanism; no deemed-approval after administrative silence.
- Uganda's 20-year sentence exceeded Russia's foreign agent law in comparative severity — for conduct that could arise from routine commercial activity.

05 · Uganda Society of Architects

WITHDRAWAL DEMANDED PRESIDENT: ARCH. KENNETH AMUNSIMIRE 4 FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Architects produced the single most quoted passage of the entire Bill debate — not through constitutional abstraction, but through a concrete, vivid scenario demonstrating that the Bill's “plain language” criminalised the most ordinary professional work imaginable.

“It cannot have been the intention of Parliament to make it a crime, punishable by ten years’ imprisonment, for a Kampala architect to accept a commission from a Ugandan family living in London to design their retirement home in Jinja. But that is precisely what the Bill, on its plain language, does.”

Uganda Society of Architects · Arch. Kenneth Amunsimire, President

- Article 27 (right to privacy) — compelling architects to disclose confidential client information to the Minister of Internal Affairs as a condition of registration.
- Article 29 (freedom of association and expression) — restricting professional collaboration with clients who reside abroad.
- Article 21 (equality before the law) — treating architects differently based on their clients’ nationality or country of residence.

Formal Recommendations:

- Withdraw the Bill for substantial redrafting in consultation with the Architects Registration Board and other built-environment professional bodies.
- In the alternative, amend the Bill to include express exemptions for regulated professionals acting in their licensed professional capacity.
- Extend the consultation period to no less than 90 days to permit full engagement with all affected professional bodies.
- Formally address the constitutional concerns raised — particularly Articles 27, 29, and 21 — before proceeding to passage.



06 · Uganda Global Forum & Diaspora Leadership Council

OPPOSED — SOUGHT 6 AMENDMENTS GLORIA NALULE MCLAUGHLIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The most data-rich submission — backed by the largest diaspora consultation ever undertaken on a single piece of Ugandan legislation. Ugandans abroad sent home USD 2.5 billion in 2025 — approximately 3.8% of national GDP. 73% of inflows arrived digitally and 61% through mobile money.

465 Webinar participants	6,000+ YouTube views in 24hrs	31 Countries reached	\$2.5B Diaspora remittances 2025 (BoU)
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Top Areas of Concern Identified by Diaspora Respondents:

- Citizens classified as “foreigners” — identity & citizenship: 32%
- Remittances and family support being captured by the Bill: 28%
- Impact on diaspora investment in property and businesses: 18%
- Registration burden on elderly and rural recipients: 13%
- Economic sabotage clause chilling legitimate commentary: 9%

“If I send Christmas presents, school books, shoes, or clothes to my family, that is termed as assistance and the recipients will have to register as foreign agents to receive them. If I want to help our village construct a well, do I need Cabinet approval to fund construction of a well in my own village? Really?”

Diaspora Respondent — Uganda Global Forum Consultative Report · April 2026

6 Formal Amendments Sought:

- A1: Remove the classification of Ugandan citizens residing abroad as foreigners under Clause 1
- A2: Clarify that lawful activities by Ugandan citizens abroad do not constitute activities of a “foreigner” or “agent of a foreigner”
- A3: Protect lawful research, opinion, commentary, and policy engagement from the Economic Sabotage clause
- A4: Exempt persons handling legitimate private matters for Ugandans abroad from agent registration under Clauses 14 & 15
- A5: Explicitly exempt remittances and lawful private support transfers from declaration requirements under Clauses 21 and 25
- A6: Exempt ordinary social support under Clause 22: family remittances, community initiatives, faith-based giving, bereavement support, emergency needs



The Statement That Changed Everything

On 30 April 2026, President Yoweri Museveni published a 4-page statement on his official X account (@KagutaMuseveni) that transformed the legislative process. The statement was not a formal veto or legislative directive — it was a public disavowal, and its political effect was immediate and absolute.

The President made three things clear: first, that the Bill as drafted did not reflect his original instruction; second, that specific categories of transactions must be excluded; and third, that only a genuinely narrow law targeting deliberate foreign political interference was what he had asked for. His intervention gave the NRM Caucus the political cover it needed to execute sweeping amendments without appearing to capitulate to opposition pressure.

"That is not the Bill I initiated. The Bill I requested was narrow — to deal with foreign interference in Uganda's political affairs. What has been drafted goes far beyond that. I am directing that the Bill be revised before it proceeds further."

President Museveni — 30 April 2026, @KagutaMuseveni on X

He specifically directed exclusion of: foreign direct investment · remittances from Ugandans abroad · donations to churches and mosques · private family transfers · commercial transactions between businesses and international clients · all activities constituting normal economic life unconnected to political influence operations.

The political mechanics that followed were swift. On the morning of 5 May 2026, the NRM Parliamentary Caucus met at the Office of the President Conference Hall and formally resolved to "support the harmonised position of Government regarding the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 in Parliament." This resolution turned the NRM bloc vote into a foregone conclusion.

Opposition Leader Hon. Joel Ssenyonyi noted the paradox: the President had published a letter disowning the Bill as originally drafted — yet Parliament passed it anyway, amended though it was. For many who had submitted to the consultation, the passage felt like a process that consulted extensively but did not ultimately listen, even when the person who initiated the Bill himself concluded it had gone wrong in the drafting.



The Amended Bill: Before & After

Parliament passed the Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 on 5 May 2026 — but the version passed bore little resemblance to the Bill tabled on 15 April. Hon. Abdallah Kiwanuka's estimate of 87% revision is borne out by a clause-by-clause comparison.

Provision	Original Bill — 15 April	Passed Bill — 5 May	Status
Definition of “Foreigner”	Explicitly included Ugandan citizens residing abroad — the single most contested provision	Ugandan citizens abroad explicitly excluded. A “foreigner” now means only a non-citizen of Uganda.	REMOVED
“Agent of a Foreigner” — Scope	Any person acting under the direction, control, or financial support of a foreigner — capturing anyone who received money from abroad	Narrowed significantly: only persons who formally and knowingly act on behalf of foreign political interests. Commercial and professional relationships excluded.	NARROWED
Definition of “Person”	Broad definition applying the law to any individual, company, or organisation receiving foreign funds above the threshold	Deleted entirely. The law is now restricted to agents of foreigners in formally defined political influence activities.	DELETED
Ministerial Powers	Minister could declare any person a foreigner; revoke registrations without cause; approve or reject foreign funding with no defined criteria	Broad ministerial discretion removed. Replaced with structured, rules-based mechanisms that require defined grounds and processes.	CURTAILED
Foreign Funding — Approval Regime	Prior written ministerial approval required before receiving any foreign financial support exceeding UGX 400M in a 12-month period	Approval regime replaced entirely by a declaration regime. Entities declare rather than seek prior approval.	TRANSFORMED
Cabinet Approval for Sectors	Required Cabinet approval for any foreign-funded entity operating in health, education, or water	Provision removed entirely from the Bill.	REMOVED
“Political Activities” — Definition	Vague — could capture any public engagement, advocacy, media commentary, or civic participation	Narrowed. Now requires a demonstrable formal connection to foreign political principals rather than mere commentary on public affairs.	CLARIFIED
UGX 400M Annual Threshold	Hard cap with prior ministerial approval required above the threshold	Threshold retained but now sits within the declaration regime rather than an approval regime. Still a concern for high-turnover commercial sectors.	RETAINED (MODIFIED)
Prison Sentence — Individuals	Up to 20 years' imprisonment — exceeding both the USA's FARA and Russia's foreign agent law in comparative severity	Reduced to 10 years' imprisonment under Clause 13. Still harsher than most comparable international frameworks including FARA.	REDUCED
Bank Penalties & Reporting	Monthly reporting of all foreign transactions; UGX 4 billion penalties per period for non-compliance	Reporting obligations narrowed. Banks no longer face blanket penalty exposure; reporting tied to registered agents of foreigners only.	MODIFIED



Provision	Original Bill — 15 April	Passed Bill — 5 May	Status
Economic Sabotage — Clause 13	20 years' imprisonment for anyone who "publishes information or participates in any act that weakens or damages the economic system or viability of the country"	Retained in the passed Bill. Prison sentence reduced from 20 to 10 years. The core offence — criminalising economic commentary without a clear intent threshold — was not resolved.	RETAINED

WHAT THE MINORITY REPORT SAID

Shadow Minister Jonathan Odur formally presented the Minority Report on 5 May 2026, documenting that 51 of 53 consultation groups rejected the Bill outright. Despite the extensive amendments, opposition MPs argued that three retained provisions still represent unconstitutional overreach: the Economic Sabotage clause (Clause 13) with no intent threshold; the UGX 400M threshold in any form; and the 10-year custodial sentence. The NRM bloc vote — taken after the morning caucus at the Office of the President — overrode the Minority Report and carried the Bill to assent.

WHAT THE PASSED BILL NOW DOES — IN PLAIN TERMS

It creates a registration and declaration framework for persons who formally and knowingly act as agents of foreign principals in activities designed to influence Uganda's political process, elections, or national security environment. It targets deliberate, organised foreign influence operations rather than the broad sweep of civil society, commerce, and diaspora activity that the original Bill would have captured.

Registration Regime: Persons formally acting as agents of foreign principals in political influence activities must register with the relevant authority and obtain a biennial certificate. Commercial, professional, and diaspora relationships are explicitly excluded.

Declaration — Not Approval: Entities receiving foreign financial support above the UGX 400M annual threshold must declare rather than seek prior approval.

"Political Activities" — Narrowly Defined: The law now specifically targets activities intended to influence elections, government policy on behalf of foreign principals, and activities threatening national security — not civic advocacy, journalism, or policy commentary generally.

Economic Sabotage Retained: Clause 13 remains in force. Publishing or participating in activities that damage Uganda's economic system or viability is still a criminal offence, carrying up to 10 years' imprisonment. No intent threshold has been legislatively defined.

Bank Obligations — Narrowed: Banks must report transactions by formally registered agents of foreigners. The blanket monthly reporting obligation and the per-period UGX 4 billion penalty have been removed or significantly narrowed.

Diaspora Explicitly Protected: The passed Bill explicitly excludes Ugandan citizens abroad from the definition of "foreigners." Remittances, family support transfers, private investment, and ordinary diaspora economic activity are no longer within the law's scope.



What This Means: Conclusions & Implications

The Protection of Sovereignty Bill, 2026 tells a story about how laws are made in Uganda — and how civic pressure can shape, even if it cannot stop, legislation that begins badly. The 20 days between 15 April and 5 May 2026 produced an extraordinary cross-sectoral mobilisation: legal bodies challenged the process on procedural grounds, the central bank governor provided expert economic analysis, cultural kingdoms invoked constitutional protections, professional associations demonstrated absurd practical consequences through concrete examples, religious councils raised human rights concerns across faith lines, and over 465 diaspora participants engaged from 31 countries. Eventually the President himself concluded the draft was wrong.

The result was a dramatically amended law. The most dangerous provisions were removed: diaspora citizens were restored to full citizenship under the law; Cabinet approval requirements for health and education programmes disappeared; unchecked ministerial power was curtailed; the approval regime became a declaration regime; and the 20-year sentence was halved. These are not marginal changes — they represent a fundamental transformation of what the Bill does and who it affects.

01 — What Civil Society Won

The diaspora classification reversal, the declaration-not-approval shift, the removal of Cabinet sector approval, the deletion of the “person” definition, and the narrowing of “agent of a foreigner” — all directly track the demands made in the institutional submissions reviewed in this report. The consultation had measurable, documented legislative impact.

02 — What Was Not Resolved

The Economic Sabotage clause (Clause 13) remains, with no intent threshold and no materiality test. The UGX 400M threshold remains within the declaration regime. The 10-year custodial sentence remains harsher than FARA. These were the concerns most consistently flagged as unconstitutional — and they survived passage without resolution.

03 — How the Decision Was Made

51 of 53 consultation groups rejected the Bill. Yet it passed — carried by a NRM bloc vote resolved in a morning caucus at the Office of the President. The formal consultation provided civic documentation and legislative pressure, but the decisive intervention was the President’s public statement, not the weight of civil society evidence alone.

The question Uganda’s civil society, legal community, diaspora, and institutions must now live with is not only what was removed from the Bill — but what remains, how it will be applied, and whether the Clause 13 Economic Sabotage provision will be used against the kind of legitimate economic commentary, professional advice, or civic journalism that every submission warned it could reach. The institutions reviewed in this report — and the 318 Ugandans who completed EML’s survey — put their concerns on the record. That record now exists. What matters next is whether it shapes how the law is enforced, challenged in court, or revisited by a future Parliament.