

THERE WERE POLICEMEN AND SECURITY GUARDS AT THE GATE, BUT THEY JUST LOOKED ON — WITNESS

# Vision journalist assaulted twice

By Adolf Ayoreka

Vision Group journalist Wesley Damba, who is attached to TV West in Mbarara and Bukedde TV in Kampala, was yesterday attacked and beaten up by a group of unknown people near the Integrated Community Based Initiative (ICOB) offices in Kabwohe town, Sheema district.

He is currently admitted to Mayanja Memorial Hospital, with serious injuries.

Damba's supervisor said Damba had gone to Kabwohe to cover a consultative meeting convened by the Forum for Democratic Change candidate for Sheema municipality parliamentary seat, Virginia Plan Mugenyi, who lost to Elioda Tumwesigye in Friday's elections.

A witness to the incident said after the meeting that was held in Sheema hall, Mugenyi's supporters grouped for a procession through Kabwohe town.

"As Damba was capturing the demonstrations while on a bodaboda, a group of men grabbed him off the motorcycle and dragged him into the gates of ICOBI offices, where they started to beat him up. There were policemen and security guards at the gate, but they just looked on," said the witness.



Damba at Kabwohe Health Centre IV, where he was admitted shortly before being transferred to Mayanja Memorial Hospital in Mbarara

He added: "When we tried to save Damba from the enraged ICOBI employees, the Police blocked us from entering. I identified identify one Police officer called Colleb Twesigye and the ICOBI administrator, Godwin Arikwera."

Another witness told *New Vision* that after the meeting, they were told that some journalists had been assaulted at ICOBI.

He said: "When we went to the ICOBI premises, we found a group men beating Damba. However, we could not help because we were blocked by Police officers. The other employees also tried to attack the journalists who were

covering the scuffle."

Damba's camera was smashed during the incident, according to a colleague.

"These people were armed with sticks and pangas. They attempted to grab me, too, but I overpowered them. The scuffle lasted some good minutes at the watchful eye of the Police" Damba's colleague said.

Damba was later taken to Kabwohe Health Centre IV by some unidentified people, from where he was moved to Mayanja Memorial Hospital. At least three other journalists were injured in the brawl.

Last Friday, Jordan Amany, the sub-county chief of Rugarama in Sheema district,



Damba being taken to Kabwohe Health Centre IV. Photo by Bruno Mugizi

"We strongly condemn the attack on our journalist, who was carrying out his work professionally and lawfully," *New Vision* editor, John Kakande said.

Kakande said available information pointed to the fact that the attack on Damba was not just the work of political hooligans, but the attack was premeditated and politically motivated.

He said the journalist was first targeted on Friday, when he was covering elections at Kigimbi polling station. A local official physically attacked Damba after seeing him taking a video recording of the voting exercise at the polling station.

"We have reason to suspect that the attack on Damba yesterday was connected to his coverage of the voting exercise on Friday," Kakande added and demanded that Police investigate the matter thoroughly, to bring the culprits to book.

## VISION COMMENTS

assaulted Damba as he documented the electoral processes at Kikonko Primary School. Damba filed a case of assault at Kabwohe Police station on vide number

Ref:40/27/07/2018.

Arikwera, last evening confirmed that Damba was beaten at the complex after he entered the gates while covering the Mugenyi demonstration.

"What was he going to do within the gates of our hospital? He entered the gate and our employees had to beat him. If he was covering the demonstration, he would have stayed outside," Arikwera said in an interview with *New Vision*.

By last evening, Police had not commented on the incident since Marshal Tumusime, the Police spokesperson for the greater Bushenyi, did not answer our calls.

Damba was still unconscious at Mayanja Memorial Hospital by press time.

# Speaker Kadaga shocked by Kasese child marriages

By John B. Thawite

The Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, has decried the rampant child marriages in Kasese district and directed local leaders to arrest the culprits.

Kadaga also urged residents to report to Police whenever they detect any case of child marriage.

She was in the district to preside over a function to raise funds for the expansion of a dormitory at Jesus Care Girls Hostel at St Phillip's Church of Uganda in Bwera Archdeaconry, Bukonzo west constituency.

Kadaga, who was accompanied by the state minister for health, Sarah Opendi, were received by the area MP, Godfrey Atkins Katusabe. Kadaga was in the area on the invitation of Bishop Jackson Nzerebende Tembo of the South Rwenzori Diocese. Bishop Nzerebende said the hostel expansion project needs about sh600m.

Kadaga reminded the newly elected Local Council I (LC1) chairpersons that one of their duties is to ensure that girls are not prematurely married off.

"How can 10-year-old children be married? In which village are they married? And the LC leaders are there and seeing them in their small homes and doing nothing?" asked Kadaga.

Kadaga, who is the Woman MP for Kamuli district, said under Uganda's decentralised system, the vice-chairperson is in charge of the children at every level.

She challenged Kasese district to emulate her district, which has enacted a by-law under which all parties involved in child marriage ceremonies are arrested.

"In Kamuli, if we find you attending that so-called wedding, you the witnesses, the parents, the bride and the bridegroom, as well as the LC1 chairperson of that village are all

## BETWEEN THE LINES

In 2012, the district enacted a child-protection law, which has mainly remained on paper.

arrested," she said.

While urging the residents to educate their children, Kadaga hailed the bishop for coming up with the idea of constructing a girls' dormitory. She said it was one way of protecting girls from being defiled as they walk to and from school.

## Teenage pregnancies

Opendi said teenage pregnancy in Uganda had reached an alarming rate, despite the existing laws.

"Madam Speaker, as a country, we are grappling with high teenage pregnancy. Out of every 100,000

pregnant mothers, 25% are pregnant before their 18th birthday," she said.

She said the high maternal mortality rate that Uganda is facing is virtually because of teenage pregnancies.

Quoting health statics, Opendi said: "Of the 360 mothers that die out of the 100,000, about 24% of them are young girls below the age of 18," she said.

Opendi said ending teenage pregnancies would help reduce the maternal mortality rate in the country.

She encouraged districts to come up with laws to punish parents who abet the practice.

Opendi excited the gathering when she rewarded a 16-year-old student of Jesus Care Girls school, Edrine Kusemererwa, with sh1m for singing a moving song condemning child marriages and teenage pregnancies.

According to the district senior welfare and probation officer, Sowedii Kitanywa, Kasese ranks second

in child marriages and teenage pregnancies in the Rwenzori sub-region, after Bundibugyo district.

"In Kasese, Munkunyu sub-county ranks the worst in the vice, followed by Maliba," Kitanywa said.

He, however, said the situation was getting better, following targeted interventions, such as the UNICEF-funded community dialogue meetings with over 10,000 people, involving more than 6,900 children and over 3,800 adults in 13 various communities in the district.

"We have also rolled out the national strategy in child marriage and teenage pregnancy in 13 lower local governments," Kitanywa said, adding that there was increased reporting on the practices.

In 2012, the district enacted a child-protection law, the Child Protection and Labour Recruitment Ordinance, which has, mainly remained on paper.