

The President says leadership founded on intimidation betrays the will of the people and weakens institutions.

BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY

President Museveni has cautioned political and religious leaders against imposing themselves on the people, urging them instead to win legitimacy through persuasion, good service delivery and tangible results.

Speaking yesterday as chief guest at the 49th St Janani Luwum Day commemoration in Kitgum District, the President said leadership founded on intimidation betrays the will of the people and weakens institutions.

"Influence people by doing good things which they see and appreciate. All these leaders, even now the ones who try to intimidate, are really like Idi Amin, who imposed himself and ended up assassinating many Ugandans, including Janani Luwum," Mr Museveni said.

Accompanied by First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Janet Museveni, the President said both scripture and political history favour persuasion over coercion.

"Amin's first mistake was to impose himself on us. Who did he think he was? Leaders should not impose themselves on the people. Both the Bible and political strategy guides show that persuading people is better than imposing yourself on them," he added.

Mr Museveni also thanked voters in northern Uganda for what he described as an overwhelming "block vote" for the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) in the recent General Election.

He noted that the region had for years largely rejected the NRM at the ballot box. "Northern Uganda was not voting for us. At one time, we were getting 12 percent. In 2011, it improved slightly.



President Museveni and First Lady Janet Museveni interact with religious leaders during the commemoration of Archbishop Janani Luwum Day in Mucwini, Kitgum District, yesterday. PHOTO: FPU

Museveni to leaders: Don't impose yourself on people

ly But we continued working for northern Uganda, whether they voted for us or not," he said.

The President cited investments in electricity expansion, schools, health centres, water projects and road infrastructure as part of government efforts to transform the sub-region. He singled

out the Acholibur-Kitgum-Musingo road that runs through Mucwini as one of the projects aimed at improving connectivity and economic activity.

"After some time, the people in the north started believing that Museveni and the NRM are good. I thank you for the overwhelming votes this time. This was through persuasion, not imposition," he said.

Mr Museveni pledged government support for the upgrade of the late Archbishop Janani Luwum's burial site into an international memorial and tourism centre.

"Once the master plan is ready, we shall start in all ways possible. You know we have developed [martyr shrines at] Namugongo, Munyonyo, and others. We cannot fail," he assured the congregation.

His remarks followed an appeal by the State Minister for Ethics and Integrity, Ms Rose Lilly Akello, who asked the government to release funds to operationalise Cabinet's 2023 decision to develop the site.

St Janani Luwum Day is commemorated annually in honour of the former Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga-Zaire, who was killed in 1977 during the regime of Idi Amin. The annual event at his burial site at Wii-gweng in Mucwini Sub-county draws religious, political and cultural leaders from across the country and beyond.

Ms Akello said Cabinet resolved in 2023 to upgrade the site into an international pilgrimage and tourism destination. "The Janani Luwum family officially donated the land to the Diocese of Kitgum, and the Church of Uganda subsequently established the St Janani Luwum Development Commit-

What he says. Influence people by doing good things which they see and appreciate. All these leaders, even now the ones who try to intimidate, are really like Idi Amin, who imposed himself and ended up assassinating many Ugandans, including Janani Luwum."

President Museveni

tee, chaired by Can Justice James Ogoola and the Provincial secretary for the Church of Uganda, among other members," Ms Akello said.

She added that a draft master plan has been prepared and is under review by a technical team comprising engineers and architects from the ministries of Tourism, Finance and Works and Transport. "A draft master-plan was drawn up and is currently being reviewed by a technical team of engineers, and architects, among others from the ministries of Tourism, Finance and Transport," she said.

Site development

The proposed development includes a church, a tomb, a museum, a multipurpose hall, a primary school, a secondary school and a medical facility. "We are optimistic that in the next commemoration in 2027, the development of the master plan would have commenced once the funds are available by the government," she added.

Meanwhile, Kitgum District chairperson Christopher Obol Arwai asked for the President's direct intervention to address renewed cattle rustling in East Acholi.

"A lot of atrocities have been unleashed by the Karimojong cattle rustlers in Kitgum. The warriors have scaled up raids in the eastern part of the district and created instability and poverty. The sub-counties most affected are Orom, Orom East, Namukora, Kiteng, Namukora Town Council and Omiya-nyima following three years of relative calm," Mr Obol said.

Challenges

He added that the raiders continue to rustle livestock, kill residents and lose property, worsening vulnerability of the affected communities. In response, Mr Museveni expressed surprise that cattle rustling persisted despite previous interventions, including the construction of security roads intended to curb raids.

"I'm surprised to hear that there is still cattle rustling in East Acholi. I am going to take an interest, and you remember when we met in Barlles some years back, we got solutions, and there is no way that problem can fail to end," he said.

Under Executive Order No.3 of 2023, the President directed the construction of key security roads around Karamoja, including routes linking Lake Baringo to Abim and Orom in Kitgum, as well as roads skirting Mount Moroto and connecting parts of Agago, Kitgum and Abim districts.

However, construction of the 77-kilometre security road between Agago and Kitgum stalled in mid-2023, three months after groundbreaking. Government had committed Shs800 million to the project, with Shs500 million released and Shs300 million expected in a subsequent quarter.

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WHO WAS JANANI LUWUM?

St Janani Luwum was the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Boga-Zaire. He was killed on February 16, 1977, during the regime of Idi Amin after openly criticising human rights abuses and state violence.

His death sparked international condemnation and cemented his legacy as a martyr for faith and justice. In 2015, February 16 was declared a public holiday in Uganda in his honour.

Every year, thousands of pilgrims gather at his burial site at Wii-gweng in Mucwini Sub-county, Kitgum District, to commemorate his life and witness.