Probe Among, jail her if guilty and seize her assets

Ms Anita Among, the outgoing Speaker of the 11th Parliament, who is also the Bukedea District Woman MP, continues to dominate the headlines but for the wrong reasons. The news we are reading is not about her exemplary leadership of Parliament. It is about corruption allegations levelled against her.

The allegations are not new. Ugandans started seeing them (in the form of documents, screenshots, photos) in 2024. If the government was serious about fighting corruption, it should have started probing her — and the institution she leads — immediately.

This article's headline actually shows how governments that are serious about fighting corruption deal with people facing corruption allegations. They take corruption allegations extremely seriously and will ignore them only if they are baseless.

Yet the government did nothing in 2024 when academic and cartoonist Jimmy Spire Ssentongo, journalist Agather Atuhaire and others started sharing documents online about corruption at Parliament. Their exposé, dubbed "Parliament Exhibition", attracted significant public and media attention.

Those defending Ms Among will say, according to our laws, she remains innocent until proven guilty. They are right. But we have to remember that in the same year the expose was done, the United Kingdom and the United States sanctioned her.

The US stated categorically that Ms Among had been sanctioned for her "involvement in significant corruption tied to her leadership of Uganda's Parliament". As I noted in a column I write for OJ-UGANDA, a news site, it is hard for US diplomats in Kampala, who are native English speakers, to tell the State Department in Washington that there is "significant corruption" at Parliament when there is none.

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They do not know Ms Among personally. They have zero axe to grind. They work with evidence. Why would their government link a politician who earns an honest livelihood to corruption and sanction her?

The government had to act there and then. There were already red flags. Normally people with nothing to hide do not behave secretively. But last October, Parliament barred *Daily Monitor* and *NTV* [NMG-Uganda] journalists from covering proceedings. No proper explanation was given.

Then *Daily Monitor* reported on May 9 that Ms Among had bought a Rolls-Royce Cullinan for Shs2.2b. The story deepened public interest in her wealth, and weeks later, police mounted a massive search of her homes, which has become the talk of the town.

The problem is that there is nothing to suggest the probe is serious. First, it did not have to wait for the ultra-expensive car to enter Uganda. Ms Among would have been questioned already about her sources of income and, crucially, whether she has declared her property, as the Leadership Code requires.

Second, Ms Among is not the only Ugandan facing corruption allegations. A government that is serious about fighting corruption would go for every single Ugandan with assets that do not correspond with their known and legitimate sources of income.

Third, unless the entire Parliament — including the communications department, it commission, commissioners and staff — are investigated, it will be hard to convince Ugandans that the probe is after corruption. It will look very much like politics pretending to be a prosecutor.

Many are speculating that since the NRM withdrew its backing for Ms Among's re-election bid for Speaker, the probe is trying to give the impression she was heavily tainted and that a better candidate had to be supported.

They may be right; they may be wrong. But the government still has plenty of time to prove it is committed to tackling corruption. And the best way to do this is to probe Ms Among and everyone suspected of corruption. If it finds incriminating evidence, it should jail all the culprits and confiscate their property.

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