

Substantive Deputy Chief Justice, Justice Alfonse Owiny-Dollo, hailed his late predecessor as a person who

judicial officer.

Former Principal Judge James

Judge James

will forever remain a courageous person, who, when acting

Association

By Henry Sekanjako
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Parliament has asked the Government to fast-track the proposed Judiciary Administration Bill, for improved full retirement benefits for retired judges and streamlining of the administration of courts.

The call was made yesterday as the MPs paid tribute to fallen former Deputy Chief Justice Laetitia Mukasa-Kikonyogo at Parliament.

The MPs raised concerns that by the time of her death, Kikonyogo had not yet received her retirement benefits as provided for by the law.

This was, however, refuted by the Deputy Attorney General, Mwesigwa Rukutana, who told the House that the deceased had been paid all her benefits before she died.

"An impression was created in the media that the deceased had not been paid, but let me clear the air. The only benefits she has missed are the ones proposed under the Judiciary

Administration Bill, which calls for full benefits for retired judges," Mwesigwa said.

Under the proposed law, judges will retain full benefits such as salary, security guards, housing allowances, car and medical insurance.

Currently, when a judge retires, they are only given sh350m as ex-gratia and a package as well as monthly pension.

"When the new law is passed, retired judges will continue to receive their full benefits. For instance, if the Deputy Chief Justice was getting sh22m as salary, she would get the same when she retires," Solomon Muyita, the Judiciary senior communications officer, told *New Vision* yesterday.

To ensure full retirement benefits for retired judges,



Justice Laetitia Kikonyogo

Parliament chaired by the Deputy Speaker, Jacob Oulanyah, implored the Government to present the Bill to Parliament as soon as possible.

Oulanyah noted that Felix Okot Ogong (Dokolo County),

had started the process for a private member's Bill on the Judiciary Administration Bill, which also aims at empowering the Judiciary to employ its own staff, but was stopped since the Government was processing the same Bill.

Rukutana, who promised to table the Bill soon, said it was stuck between the Government and finance ministry, which is supposed to issue to government a certificate of financial implication, before the Bill can be tabled in Parliament for consideration.

Kikonyogo hailed

MPs remembered the deceased as a judge and legal personnel who defended the rights of women and children.

Kikonyogo was remembered as a woman lawyer who

inspired many women to join the then male-dominated legal profession.

"She was an exceptional lady, with intellectual ability. She implored women lawyers to fight for justice. She touched many lives of Ugandans," Cecilia Ogwal (District Woman representative) said.

The motion to pay tribute to Kikonyogo, who died of a heart attack at Mulago Hospital last week, was moved by the First Deputy Prime Minister, Moses Ali.

In his eulogy, the retired general described the deceased as a selfless person and an accomplished lawyer who served the Government in various capacities, including being the Deputy Chief Justice.

"In Kikonyogo, the country has lost an accomplished

lawyer, who fought for justice, the rights of children and women. She advocated for rule of law and good governance," Ali said.

Seconding the motion, Rowland Mugume, the acting Leader of Opposition in Parliament, said the Judiciary had lost a resourceful person, whose knowledge would be tapped by magistrates to deliver justice.

Relatedly, the Judiciary yesterday issued a statement saying the media misrepresented the comments made by the Chief Justice, Bart Katureebe, about the payment of Justice Laetitia Kikonyogo.

The statement said the late Justice Kikonyogo was paid her ex-gratia for a vehicle and housing; and is also one of the Judiciary pensioners who have been promptly receiving their monthly pension payments.

What the Chief Justice said was: "It is sad that Justice Kikonyogo died before the President's promise for judges to retire with full benefits has been realised."