



An NUP supporter caned by officers from JAT as he went to attend a political rally. PHOTO/MICHAEL KAKUMIRIZI

# Change seekers greet EU's resolution with scepticism

As Robert Kyagulanyi steps onto major international platforms urging the European Union to tighten scrutiny on Kampala, a fresh EU resolution has reignited debate over sanctions, sovereignty and whether foreign pressure can truly shift Uganda's political trajectory.

BY ISAAC MUFUMBA

In the second half of last month, Robert Kyagulanyi, alias Bobi Wine, the National Unity Platform (NUP) principal, addressed two high-profile meetings albeit virtually. First was the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy, which he addressed on Feb-

ruary 18. Then, on February 23, he addressed the European Parliament.

Mr Kyagulanyi called on the European Union (EU) to continue taking a keen interest in the goings-on in Uganda.

"I want to further call for more interest and more attention for the people of Uganda. We really appreciate the attention, but we still request the inter-

## REAL BITE?

### The resolution in brief

The European Parliament adopted a major resolution condemning the handling of Uganda's January 15, 2026 general election, highlighting issues including:

- Election conduct described as marred by abuses, widespread intimidation, fraud, violence and an internet blackout.
- Repression of opposition figures, including threats against Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine) and veteran leader Dr. Kizza Besigye.

- Calls for the immediate, unconditional release of those arbitrarily detained and condemnation of political-related killings.
- Urging Ugandan authorities to stop military trials for civilians, account for missing persons, and respect civil and political rights.
- A recommendation for independent and impartial investigations into alleged crimes against humanity by political and military leaders.

This resolution was adopted with a very large majority (514 in favour, 3 against, 56 abstentions).

## Resolve.

I promise you, we will do that.

We will make sure as a Chair of the delegation on Africa, I assure you that we will keep an eye on Uganda and we will follow the situation very closely," Ms Vautmans said.

EU interest

national community to keep an eye on Uganda, to keep an eye on what is going on here in our country," he said.

Ms Hilde Vautmans, chair of the European Parliament's Delegation to the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly (DAFR), had a response.

"I promise you, we will do that. We will make sure as a chair of the delegation on Africa, I assure you that we will keep an eye on Uganda and we will follow the situation very closely," Ms Vautmans said.

## EU interest

Mr Kyagulanyi's appeal, however, came at a time when the EU had already expressed more than casual interest in what has been going on in Uganda since the January 15 General Election.

Eleven days before, 514 members of the Parliament of the EU voted to adopt a resolution condemning what it termed as the "widespread intimidation, harassment and detention" of members of the political Opposition in the aftermath of the elections. The resolution accused the government of muzzleing civil society organisations and harassment of journalists and human rights defenders.

There were 56 abstentions for the resolution which also called for electoral reforms; an end to the trial of civilians in military courts; unconditional release of political prisoners and; an investigation into allegations of crimes against humanity.



Dr Chris Baryomunsi, the Minister of ICT

Mr Patrick Oboi Amuriat, President FDC

Those members of Parliament who are debating from a position of ignorance, they do not know how the elections were conducted in Uganda. None of them have even ever stepped in Uganda. So they are just making their ignorance public.

We are not excited about this because this is not the first time it's happening. Although the dimension here is much bigger because an opposition leader is allowed to address the European Parliament and get a resolution of that parliament.

The MPs called on EU member states to "engage critically" with the authorities in Kampala and give priority to supporting civil society, journalists and human rights defenders in Uganda.

Finally, in what appeared to point to the commencement of a process that could possibly lead to the imposition of sanctions, the parliament called on member states of the EU to review their cooperation agreements with Uganda "to ensure respect for EU principles".

Dr Chris Baryomunsi, the Minister of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and National Guidance, dismissed the resolution saying the entire debate had been driven by lack of knowledge.

"Well, we shall respond formally as a government through our diplomatic channels, but what I can say now is that those members of Parliament who are debating from a position of ignorance, they do not know how the elections were conducted in Uganda. None of them have even ever stepped in Uganda. So they are just making their ignorance public," Dr Baryomunsi said.

## Scepticism

Whereas NUP has largely welcomed developments in Europe, some sections of the Opposition and civil society have received them with scepticism.

Mr Livingstone Sewanyana, the executive director of the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, thinks that the resolutions have "no teeth to bite." For now, he says, they are of no more than rhetorical value.

"I think they're still at the level of rhetoric. I don't think they have demonstrated any real significant movement beyond that (resolutions) because when States want to take some serious actions, they do not usually speak a lot. They only act. Resolutions in parliament and all that are mere expressions of concern. They do not go beyond that," Mr Sewanyana says.

Mr Patrick Oboi Amuriat, the president of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), says the EU had ignored earlier attempts by the Opposition party to draw its attention to what has been going on in Uganda.

"I think we are not excited about this