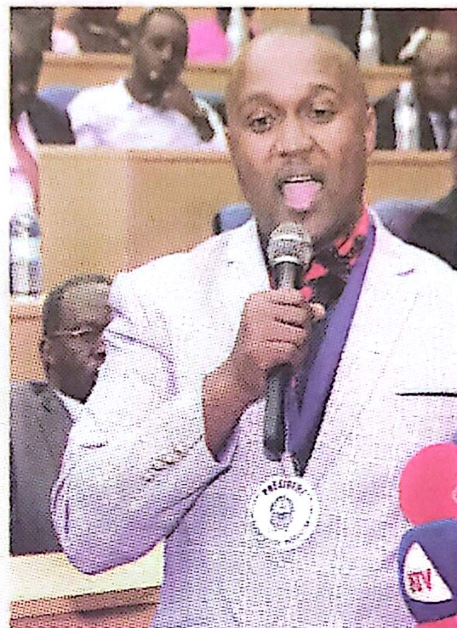


# Doctors should take govt commitment, return to work

In one of the last meetings between government and leaders of Uganda Medical Association (UMA), it is reported that the two sides agreed on some of the demands for the start as a condition for doctors to end the ongoing industrial action. We applaud the doctors for listening to our pleas through the government. However, it is also reported that the doctors agreed to resume duties 'only if government commits itself in writing to the said demands,' so that it is 'enforceable!'

Some of the demands reportedly agreed upon include; a supplementary budget to cater for some of the demands, duty facilitation allowances for all doctors in public service, disbanding or restructuring of the State House Health Monitoring Unit, welfare and training of Senior House Officers and intern doctors.

Whereas the doctors' demand for a written agreement from government is understandable given a series of doctors' strikes and previous nego-



tiations, it is likely to render the purpose, process of mutual discussion and agreement, meaningless. Our assumption is that while sitting down to discuss the matter, both sides disregarded the legal consideration of the issue, but were concerned about the reality on the ground regarding the impact of doctors' absence in our hospitals. A written commitment

would imply an intention by doctors to continue engaging government in legally-related battles, which cannot solve the problem. We also understand that government has equal legal concern regarding status of UMA and some of the previous court injunctions, which we request government to ignore and face the reality on the ground. The problem is not legal, but mainly a social one. It is about life.

We, therefore, urge the doctors to take the government's commitment in good faith and return to work. Ignore insistence on written commitment; it indicates you are driven and motivated by other intentions other than the process of mutual understanding with government in the interest of innocent Ugandans. Written agreement is enforceable, but unsustainable and unnecessary at this point in time. Ignore it.

**Bernard Odida,  
Kampala.**