

MPS **FIGHT** OVER SOVEREIGNTY BILL AT MUNYONYO RETREAT

By Vision Reporters

MPs on the defence and legal committees of Parliament spent the weekend at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala, locked in disagreement over the writing of the controversial Sovereignty Bill report.

The legislators spent the weekend in Munyonyo, drafting the Sovereignty Bill report, which is expected to be tabled in the House this week.

Sources at the meeting said a section of MPs clashed with the chairperson, Wilson Kajwengye of Nyabushozi county, after he adopted the revised Bill, instead of debating each clause as stipulated under the original one.

"Force had to be deployed to calm tensions," the source said.

The Bill was revised late last week, following President Yoweri Museveni's comments about it on Thursday.

In his statement, the President recommended that clauses that will negatively affect Uganda's financial inflows be struck out.

"I have talked to Hon. Hamson Obua and the chairpersons

of the relevant Parliamentary Committees to make the Bill concentrate on the Sovereignty of policy-decision making and not to meander in the areas of freedom of private enterprise transfers or private money transfers or church donations," the President stated on Thursday.

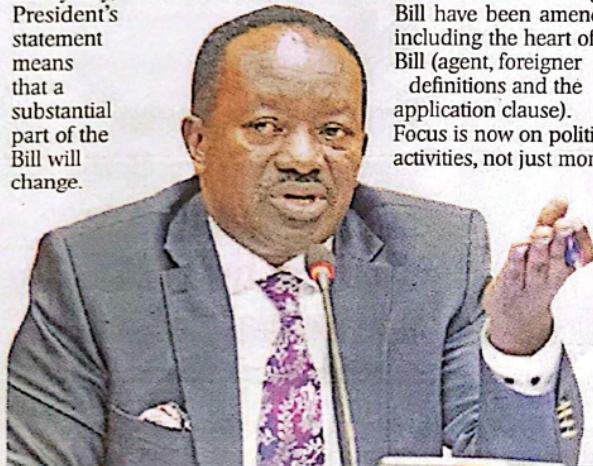
An MP, who spoke to *New Vision*, on condition of anonymity, said the President's statement means that a substantial part of the Bill will change.

"The President's message has made a substantial part of the Bill to change through the effort of the Attorney General," he said.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal experts, however, said that if the Bill's contents are substantially changed, the Government will have to table a completely new Bill.

"Clauses in the Sovereignty Bill have been amended, including the heart of the Bill (agent, foreigner definitions and the application clause). Focus is now on political activities, not just money.



Wilson Kajwengye, MP Nyabushozi county and chairperson of the Defence Committee of Parliament



Ssegona, Busiro East



Odur, Erute South



Olanya, Kilak South

This is not the same Bill that the public commented on. It must be withdrawn," he stated.

SECOND DISAGREEMENT

A source also said Erute South lawmaker Jonathan Odur, plus his counterparts Gilbert Olanya of Kilak South and Medard Ssegona of Busiro East, protested the fact that they were given a summarised report of stakeholders' submissions.

"We wanted submissions of all entities that spoke about the Bill. We said we do not want you to summarise for us, allow us to read through all these documents, by ourselves, process them, form our

opinion and start considering the provisions therein. So, we broke off for lunch and then we adjourned to resume at 3:00pm.

"The chairperson [Wilson Kajwengye] has been defiant; he wanted people to proceed, but members held their ground, saying the Bill in itself is like a suicide pill," he explained.

By press time, the committee members were still compiling the final report, which will be presented to the House alongside the Bill this week.

The Bill, which was first tabled in Parliament on April 15, by Maj. Gen. Kahinda Otaiire, the Minister of Internal

Affairs, seeks to protect Uganda against foreign interference. However, critics argued that the Bills' provisions are vague and punitive.

The Bill seeks to regulate foreign funding, tighten controls on external influence, and impose stiff penalties for activities deemed harmful to Uganda's sovereignty.

It has met stiff resistance from the clergy, bankers, cultural leaders and non-government organisations.

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