



TIMELINE

with
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NRM new stock Nameere claims gumite

As Ugandans, every morning we wake up emotionally armored. Not because we are natural pessimists, but because the State has been remarkably consistent at showing us premium *shege*. Experience has taught us that when it comes to governance, low expectations are not defeatist, they are a mental health strategy. Still, this regime has gifts. Just when you think you have seen it all, it pulls out a wildcard like a magician who refuses to retire a trick. This week's wildcard came wrapped in judicial robes, the Masaka City Woman MP recount.

What began as a routine court-ordered recount quickly turned into a national comedy skit with legal subtitles. Following the January election, where NUP's Rose Nalubowa was declared winner, NRM's Justine Nameere petitioned court. Chief Magistrate Albert Asiimwe ordered a recount. We leaned, it was proper *de javu* because we have seen this movie before. *Ka boom*, a ballot box with a broken seal was discovered. In previous seasons of Uganda elections, this is where the referee blows the whistle and everyone goes home. A broken seal is supposed to be electoral death. Fatal injury. End of match. I am no lawyer but I have read up some of these, thanks to Nameere, and as per the law, that is the point the Chief Magistrate was supposed to wash his hands like Pilate.

But not this time. Instead of halting the recount, the court calmly said, "let us just remove this one box and continue." Lawyers cleared their throats. Nalubowa's legal team walked out. NUP followed. The recount marched on, unbothered, like nothing had happened. Finally, the verdict dropped: Nameere was declared winner with 25,502 votes. Nalubowa was revised down to about 23,176. This neatly reversed the Electoral Commission's earlier numbers, where Nalubowa had led comfortably. The math was impressive. Elastic, even. *Ati* numbers do not lie but people do and unfortunately, it is the same people meant to explain them.

Immediately, lawyers warned of dangerous precedent. Senior counsels gently reminded everyone that magistrates do not set precedents but they can definitely set moods. Even me, who learnt some *ka* little law as a course unit at MUBS, knows that. Nalubowa's team are at the High Court, arguing the petition was filed late and the recount ignored both law and logic. Nameere's supporters, meanwhile, insisted justice had finally been served and blamed irregularities, we know irregularities but they are regular here dependent on the political party you subscribe to.

