



THE TIMELINE

with
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Besigye prayers postponed. Wow!

I am deeply convinced that when Ugandans finally arrive in heaven, there will be a familiar accent at the reception desk. Perhaps even a small sign: "Pearl of Africa – This Way." So my people, guard your passport and National ID carefully. That blue booklet may frustrate you at embassies on earth, but in heaven or Janna, depending on your subscription tier, it might unlock express entry. Spiritually speaking, we are consistent clients. After all, in Uganda, before we attempt a technical solution, we schedule a prayer. Corruption? Prayer breakfast. Budget gaps? National thanksgiving. Presidential birthday? Mega intercession with refreshments and some transport refund.

We are a nation that leans heavenward first. Policy can wait; prayer cannot. So when news spread that a special Mass would be held at St Mary's Cathedral Rubaga to pray for Dr Kizza Besigye and other political prisoners, it felt ordinary, almost predictable. Lent season. Solemn mood. Organised by Winnie Byanyima, his wife. The message was simple: Pray for the detained, the sick, the nation. Archbishop Paul Ssemwogerere was expected to preside at 2pm. The pews filled early. People came not with placards or shouting like they would ordinarily do given the cause, but with rosaries.

Just an announcement citing issues still being discussed for harmony. Later, Byanyima told the congregation that the archbishop had received a direct call from the President requesting postponement pending investigations into whether the gathering was "political." Uganda, what a wow! We can pray for steady progress. We can pray for economic transformation. But praying for a jailed citizen? Suddenly heaven requires clearance.

Dr Besigye, once a Bush-War ally, now faces treason charges after over a year in detention. Wheelchair court appearances. Bail denied. Ugandans are calling for compassion. The State is calling it due process. Police stood outside but did not intervene. The official Mass was postponed but the prayers were not. In a country famous for prayer breakfasts with tea and speeches, the one prayer that unsettles power came without catering. Perhaps that is what made it echo louder.

