

Tumwine criticises Opposition MPs

By Vision Reporters

"We need to find the things that unite us. How can a simple motion divide us?" This was Gen. Elly Tumwine's question to Parliament yesterday.

Tumwine, a member of the High Command, asked this while contributing to a debate on a motion moved in Parliament to commend Speaker Rebecca Kadaga for restoring order in the House on Wednesday when it had become rowdy and violent.

On Wednesday, Kadaga suspended 25 mainly Opposition MPs from the House for misconduct. The suspension triggered dramatic scenes in Parliament involving clashes between security operatives and the Opposition MPs.

The MPs were trying to derail Parliament in order to block the tabling of a motion for the Bill to remove the presidential age limit. The Constitution, under Article 102(b) prohibits a person aged 75 years from standing for president. The National Resistance Movement (NRM)

MPs are seeking an amendment to scrap the age limit.

"After the storm, there is calmness. I have been in this Parliament for 31 years but I have never seen the Speaker being stretched. I have never experienced that anger. Security forces have been victims, we shall maintain security," Tumwine, one of the UPDF representatives and former army commander, said.

Responding to people who have been wondering why other security forces were called in to Parliament to eject the suspended MPs, he said the security forces came in to back the Sergeant at Arms.

The general argued that Parliament was a place for people to discuss freely and not a place for chaos. He accused the suspended MPs of being unruly and degrading the dignity of the title 'honourable'. He said what they fought for prior to 1986 was not what was happening.

"People degrading the pride of our nation! We shed blood for peace and democracy to be

"People abuse us (UPDF) a lot. After so much sacrifice, we cannot just let it go." **Elly Tumwine**

restored," said an emotional Tumwine.

Tumwine, who during his contribution became emotional and kept silent for a minute, attacked the Opposition MPs for dominating debates in the House at the expense of other members.

"People abuse us (UPDF) a lot. After so much sacrifice, we cannot just let it go. We shall not be afraid. If you don't fear anything, nothing fears you."

"We are deprived to speak because we are more disciplined.

Ugandans are worried about what has been happening. But sometimes it is good for bad things to happen to open our eyes. It is good for a boil to burst, anything in excess pours outside," Tumwine added.

He wondered how rowdy MPs could claim immunity when they threatened to kill their colleagues and broke doors and microphones. He warned that the rights of MPs are not above those of other people.

He cautioned that once there is a security breakdown the peace people are enjoying would be lost. The general said he had asked the Opposition MPs whether their resistance to the motion was a 'do or die matter'. But he got no proper responses.

Tumwine concluded his contribution with a song, which he says he sings during his happier moments. The song praises Uganda's beauty and natural endowments.

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