

LETTER OF THE DAY

Noise pollution: Are some establishments above the law?

Mbale City is increasingly facing a serious environmental and public health crisis arising from uncontrolled noise pollution caused by the rapid and unregulated establishment of bars and entertainment lounges within residential and commercial areas.

Of particular concern is the continued failure by responsible authorities to enforce environmental laws and protect the rights of residents, patients, businesses and institutions affected by excessive night-time noise.

One of the most concerning cases is of an entertainment establishment that commenced operations on 24 December 2025 in the Senior Quarters area of Mbale City.

Since its establishment, the premises have operated as a high-volume discotheque, playing excessively loud music from Wednesday through Sunday between 9pm and 6:30am the next morning.

Residents and affected institutions contend that the noise generated by the establishment is excessive, unreasonable and wholly incompatible with a residential neighbourhood and nearby sensitive public facilities.

Particularly troubling is the incident of April 7 2026, when officials from the National Environment Management Authority reportedly impounded sound equipment from the premises as part of enforcement action against the ongoing noise pollution.

However by the same evening, the operators allegedly procured replacement equipment and resumed operations with even louder noise levels than before. This has led many residents to question whether the proprietors of the establishment are operating above the



law and beyond the reach of regulatory institutions.

It is further alleged that no Environmental Impact Assessment, environmental review, or meaningful public consultations were conducted prior to the establishment and commencement of operations of the lounge, contrary to established environmental principles and legal requirements.

Concerns have also been raised that the license reportedly sought was for a restaurant business, yet the premises subsequently transformed into a full-scale discotheque operating throughout the night with amplified music.

The lounge is located in close proximity to Mt. Elgon Hospital. Patients receiving treatment are entitled to a peaceful and medically conducive environment for recovery. However, the persistent noise pollution has disrupted patient rest, interfered with healthcare delivery.

The hospitality industry has equally suffered economic losses. Nearby hotel establishments have experienced reduced bookings and reputational harm as visitors increasingly avoid the area due to excessive noise.

Residents of Senior Quarters and surrounding areas report sleep deprivation, emotional distress, reduced productivity, anxiety and disruption of family life.

Of even greater concern is the apparent inaction and selective enforcement by the city environment office and the National Environment Management Authority. Despite numerous written complaints and appeals from residents, institutions, and businesses, no effective and lasting enforcement action appears to have been implemented to abate the nuisance.

This matter is no longer merely a neighborhood inconvenience; it constitutes a significant

environmental, public health, and governance concern.

Excessive and prolonged exposure to noise pollution has well-documented health consequences, including stress, sleep disorders, anxiety, reduced concentration and other psychological and physiological effects.

The affected people in Mbale City are therefore calling upon the following institutions to urgently intervene:

National Environment Management Authority, Mbale City Council, Ministry of Local Government, Law enforcement agencies and relevant regulatory bodies.

The affected community respectfully requests that the following actions be taken

Conduct an independent investigation into the establishment and operation of the lounge.

Verify whether all environmental and licensing requirements were lawfully complied with.

Enforce environmental and noise pollution laws without fear or favour.

Hold accountable any public officials who may have failed in their statutory responsibilities.

Restrict entertainment operations to legally permissible hours.

Enforce mandatory sound-proofing and noise mitigation measures for entertainment establishments operating near residential and sensitive public facilities.

Ensure meaningful public consultations are conducted before approval of similar establishments within residential areas.

Mbale City deserves orderly urban development that respects public health, environmental standards business interest, and the rule of law. Authorities must act decisively and urgently before the situation deteriorates further.

Kutosi Willy. M,
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