

ESTHER NAMUGOJI



A highly respected pornography detection and prosecution committee has been sworn-in, at last. Like superheroes outfitted in colourful bodysuits, I picture them soaring into the sky with a trail of fire behind them as they vanquish ghosts of pornography, left, right and centre. There should be a cartoon like that for this scenario, by the way. Anyway, this topic keeps raising its ugly head every week, until I have to acknowledge it with a nod. But really, when did pornography become one of Uganda's biggest problems? World over, the definition of pornography is only easier to define when the people involved are producing and distributing it. This way, you can pinpoint who to arrest and prosecute, especially in countries where there is actually a porn industry. But in Uganda, there is a very small chance of finding pornography producers. So, a committee with a bloated budget will be tempted to exaggerate its role to the extent that even SMS texts between lovers may be tagged pornographic. And will a picture of ethics minister Simon

How did porn become a national emergency?

Lokodo's elderly Karimojong kinsmen in traditional (un)dress pass the test? Everyone has their own standards of morality, depending on numerous factors. In the meantime, how many fundamental freedoms will be violated in the process of trying to curb these morals?

There are arguments that pornography corrupts morals, ruins marriages, it is offensive, it degrades women, it may promote sexual violence, etc. Speaking of degradation of women and sexual violence, there is an ongoing horror in Entebbe that is keeping women in deep fear.

In the last four months, over 23 women have been killed in senseless and degrading ways. Whoever is behind the atrocities has continued their terror campaign, despite the detention of the alleged main suspect and deployment of security agents. Yet when priorities are being drawn up, pornography detection gets the sh2b before serial murderer detection.

But I digress. In my view, pornography is such a huge and vague concept, compared to other concrete causes of the same problems. Rural areas have higher rape and defilement rates than most urban areas, and yet

the rural folk have very limited access to pornography.

Whenever local leaders are interviewed about the incidents of rape and defilement, they mostly point at drug abuse and alcoholism as the main triggers. Indeed, excess alcohol and drugs tend to dull the person's sense of danger and wrong, leading to many crimes. Most domestic violence incidents, including murders, can be linked to someone who returned home still high from a drinking spree. When the perpetrators are sober, they are (or seem like) decent human beings.

This cocktail of intoxication is also responsible for a lot of moral decadence, if we are really interested in tracing the problem. The Government could achieve more success if it implements previous plans to ban the sale of strong liquor in cheap sachets. It could gain more on the moral front by dismantling drug cartels in Uganda.

I question the integrity of a Ministry of Ethics and Integrity that only rises to the occasion where sexual morality is concerned. The ministry appears half-dead to the nudging of other forms of corruption. We might need a nine-member committee to detect what is going on there.