

BY SIMON PETER EMWAMU

SOROTI. Court users in Teso Sub-region have asked Chief Justice Flavian Zeija to prioritise transparency and efficiency in the justice system, citing persistent delays, corruption allegations and declining public trust in the Judiciary.

The concerns were raised on Tuesday during a court open day held at the Soroti High Court Circuit, where residents and legal practitioners shared experiences of delayed justice, particularly in land-related disputes that have dragged on for years.

Many court users said the slow handling of cases has left litigants financially drained and unable to reclaim land taken by grabbers.

Mr William Emasu, a resident of Orungo County, told the Chief Justice that his land dispute has remained unresolved for more than 40 years.

"The person who is grabbing my land is freely cultivating on it, yet I cannot even get court's help to secure an in-

Teso court users task Chief Justice on transparent justice

junction. The land also has our family graves, which are being destroyed," Mr Emasu said.

Another court user, Mr William Alloch, a founding member of the Iteso Cultural Union, said the slow resolution of land cases has left many families homeless.

"Why should we allow greedy individuals to drive the poor into misery? Something should be done so that land cases are handled quickly and transparently," Mr Alloch said.

Residents also raised concerns about alleged manipulation of court records. Mr Razak Kolou, a resident of Getom, claimed that some court judgments disappear from records, allowing individuals who had lost cases to reopen them through legal loopholes.

"This trend should be investigated because it undermines trust in the justice system," Mr Kolou said.



Flavian Zeija, Chief Justice

Legal practitioners in the region said public confidence in the Judiciary has significantly declined due to delays and difficulties in accessing justice.

Mr Eddie Nangulu, who represent-

ed the Uganda Law Society in eastern Uganda, said the Chief Justice had assumed office at a time when trust in the institution was at a low point.

"The Chief Justice has taken office at a time when confidence in the Judiciary is at an all-time low. Many people feel they cannot easily access justice," Mr Nangulu said.

He also raised concern about the application of bail guidelines, which he said remains one of the most violated rights in the criminal justice system.

Mr Nangulu said many cases take between seven and 10 years to be concluded, leaving litigants frustrated and exhausted.

"People are sometimes remanded for more than nine years. There is no dignity in prison, and we are losing young people who fail to reintegrate into society after spending long periods in custody," he said.

In response, Chief Justice Zeija acknowledged the challenges affecting the Judiciary, attributing some of the delays to limited financial resources.

He said the Judiciary's budget allocation has remained largely stagnant over the past three years despite a steady increase in the number of cases.

The Chief Justice also revealed that the Judiciary is grappling with a shortage of judges.

"We currently have about 90 judges in the country yet we need at least 150. The shortage means the existing judges are overwhelmed by the number of cases," he said.

Justice Zeija said adequate funding would help the Judiciary address many of the challenges affecting service delivery.

"If we get adequate funding, we can address these challenges in a short time," he said.