

Govt engages Syria to rescue Ugandan housemaid on trial

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

KAMPALA. The government said yesterday it is engaging authorities in Syria to rescue Vicky Ajok, a Ugandan housemaid working in Syria who was recently convicted of murdering her boss and faces execution.

Uganda's Foreign Affairs State Minister, Mr Henry Okello Oryem, told the *Daily Monitor* last evening that they are in discussions with their Syrian counterparts to devise means of ensuring that AJok is rescued from pending death. "We have written to them several times. I hope that by the end of this week, one of us will be able to go there. But also, I am trying to get in touch with the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs to see how we can get that thing cancelled."

Ajok faces execution following her confession to murdering her employer, 87-year-old veteran Syria Huda Shaarawi at her home in Damascus. She allegedly killed Shaarawi on January 29 using a blunt object amid claims of abuse and unpaid wages, before fleeing and being captured.

Syrian law categorises murder as a serious crime, with premeditated murder and murder resulting from violent crimes often punishable by death penalty. As a retentionist state, Syria applies capital punishment for various offenses, including murder and arson resulting in death, under its legal system.

In a video that circulated on social media, Ajok allegedly cited prolonged abuse, being beaten, denied food and threatened with poisoning and unpaid wages as reasons that led to the fatal confrontation of her boss.

While speaking to the media in Kampala, early this month, the State Minister for Labour, Employment and Industrial Relations, Ms Davina Anyakun emphasised that Uganda has no bilateral labour agreement with Syria and no licensed recruitment companies authorised to deploy Ugandans there.

Ms Anyakun warned Ugandans against working in Syria, noting that the country remains an active war zone, making labour migration illegal, and highly dangerous.

