

WHO IS JUSTICE KAWUMI, THE NEW DEPUTY CHIEF JUSTICE

By Michael Odeng
and Farooq Kasulei

From private legal practice to serving in the High Court circuits of Mubende and Kabale, Justice Moses Kazibwe Kawumi has steadily risen through Uganda's judicial ranks to become the country's new Deputy Chief Justice (DCJ), the second highest office in the Judiciary.

President Yoweri Museveni on Wednesday appointed Kawumi on the advice of the Judicial Service Commission, ending a five-month vacancy in one of the Judiciary's most influential positions. The appointment was made under Article 142(1) of the 1995 Constitution. Kawumi, 63, hitherto a judge of the Court of Appeal and Constitutional Court, replaces Dr Flavian Zeija, who was elevated to Chief Justice, following the retirement of Alfonse Owiny-Dollo on January 18, this year after attaining the mandatory retirement age of 70.

According to a statement issued by the Presidential Press Unit, Kawumi's name has been forwarded to Parliament for vetting before he formally assumes office, as required by the Constitution.

However, the approval process is expected to await the election of a new Speaker of Parliament, who also chairs the appointments committee. Members of Parliament are scheduled to elect the speaker and deputy speaker on May 25.

Under Uganda's judicial structure, the DCJ deputises the Chief Justice in the administration of the Judiciary and heads the Court of Appeal, which also serves as the Constitutional Court.

Kawumi's elevation marks another milestone in a judicial career that has seen him serve in different parts of the country before rising to the appellate bench.

Beyond the Judiciary, he is also involved in community and faith-based initiatives. He serves as an adviser to Grace Villa Limited, a Kabale-based non-profit organisation that supports disadvantaged girls through education sponsorship and shelter.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Haji Hamim Ssentongo, the former chairperson of National Resistance Army veterans in Kyankwanzi district and the greater Mubende sub-region, welcomed the appointment, describing it as recognition of Buganda's contribution to national development.

"During the campaigns, we

ABOUT JUSTICE KAWUMI

Justice Moses Kazibwe Kawumi was born on August 22, 1963. He hails from Mubende. He joined the bar in 1989 upon graduating from the Law Development Centre. He began his legal career at Kawanga and Kasule advocates.

Between 1989 and 1996, Kawumi was a lecturer at LDC. Between 1992 and 1998, he served as the legal aid counsel under the legal aid project of the Uganda Law Society.

From 2003 to 2012, he was a lecturer of law at Uganda Christian University.

Between 1998 and 2011, he served as a corporate lawyer in the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA). His notable achievements at URA included leading the litigation division to a 75% success rate and spearheading the introduction and enforcement of a rigorous Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) strategy that saved the authority substantial litigation costs.

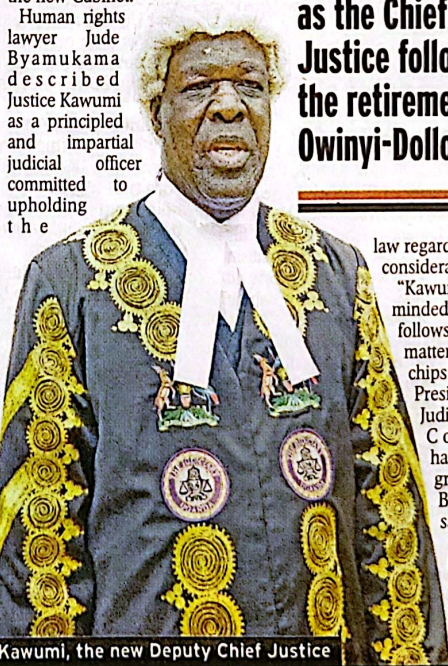
After leaving URA, he established his own law firm of Kazibwe Kawumi and Company Advocates.

In April 2016, he was appointed a judge of the High Court. He holds a bachelor of laws degree from Makerere University and a master's degree in management studies from Uganda Management Institute.

reminded the President of our request to appoint more Baganda to top government positions, and we thank him for appointing Justice Kawumi as Deputy Chief Justice. This shows he is a considerate and listening leader," Ssentongo said.

Ssentongo, who is also a long-serving National Resistance Movement mobiliser in Buganda, said they expect more appointments from the region in the new Cabinet.

Human rights lawyer Jude Byamukama described Justice Kawumi as a principled and impartial judicial officer committed to upholding the



Kawumi, the new Deputy Chief Justice



**Kawumi replaces
Dr Flavian Zeija
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law regardless of political considerations.

"Kawumi is a fair-minded jurist who follows the law no matter where the chips fall. The President and the Judicial Service Commission have made a great choice," Byamukama said.

NEW CHIEF REGISTRAR

The President has also appointed

Agnes Alum as the new Chief Registrar of the Judiciary.

The office of Chief Registrar had fallen vacant after Sarah Langa Siu was appointed a High Court judge last year.

Pamela Lamunu Ocaya has since been serving in acting capacity for over a year.

Born on October 27, 1973, Alum joined the Judiciary as magistrate grade one in 2004.

KAWUMI'S HIGH-PROFILE CASES

Among the recent high-profile matters handled by Kawumi was a Constitutional Court petition challenging the co-operation agreement between the Democratic Party (DP) and the National Resistance Movement (NRM).

The court unanimously dismissed the petition in a ruling delivered on March 2, 2026, holding that it did not raise constitutional questions requiring the court's interpretation, and that the DP-NRM co-operation arrangement does not violate the Constitution.

The petition had been filed by six DP members – Richard Lumu (Mityana South MP), Michael Lulume Bayigga (Buikwe South MP), Richard Sebamala (Bukoto Central MP), John Paul Lukwago (Kyotera County), Fred Kayondo (Mukono South) and Fortunate Nantongo (Kyotera District Woman MP).

He was also among the Court of Appeal justices, who upheld a Commercial Court decision ordering Karim Hirji, the proprietor of Imperial Royale Hotel to refund \$1.46m (approximately sh5.5b) to the Government.

The November 2025 ruling stems from a contract breach, confirming that the hotel failed to prepare rooms for the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). The hotel was also ordered to pay sh800m in damages for breach of contract.

The appellate court rejected the hotel's appeal, holding it liable for not being ready to host delegates.

In February 2020, Justice Kawumi, sitting at the Criminal Division of the High Court in Kampala, found Brian Bagyenda, the son of the former Internal Security Organisation boss, Col. Kaka Bagyenda guilty of the murder of his girlfriend Enid Twijukye. He sentenced him to 32 years in prison.

This was after he dismissed Bagyenda's insanity defence saying it was an afterthought to escape justice.