

Teso residents respond to Among's troubles

BY SIMON PETER EMWAMU

TESO. A section of leaders and residents in the Teso Sub-region has reacted sharply to the troubles facing embattled outgoing Speaker of Parliament Anita Among, with some saying she is solely responsible for her current predicament.

The reactions follow mounting pressure on Ms Among amid investigations into alleged corruption, illicit enrichment, and abuse of office, which have dominated public debate in recent days.

Mr Benson Ekwee, the executive director of Public Affairs Uganda, a non-governmental organisation, said the outgoing House Speaker's downfall was largely self-inflicted, accusing her of surrendering the independence of Parliament to the Executive.

"She is the first Speaker to hand Parliament to the Executive to the extent that she served the Executive beyond measure. She did whatever bidding they wanted and ended up in that situation," Mr Ekwee said.

He added that Parliament under Ms Among's leadership ceased to effectively play its oversight role.

"Parliament became a department of the Executive arm of government. She was not very smart politically. Look at some of the recent laws they passed, including the UPDF Act. Now she has ended up in the situation she finds herself in," he added.

Mr Ekwee further argued that the developments surrounding Ms Among go beyond questions of accountability and corruption.

"There are bigger governance issues involved. This was well timed because between her swearing-in and the election of a new Speaker, there is a gap where she is vulnerable," he said.

Mr Ekwee also claimed that political systems built around revolutionary movements often operate through deception and power calculations.

"When you deal with revolutionary systems, you may not understand their intentions. You end up

serving their interests but eventually get trapped. Because she was not very smart, she finds herself in that predicament," Mr Ekwee said.

Retired Col Joseph Onange, the proprietor of Kumi Hotel, said the current developments were inevitable, insisting that no one is above the law.

"What is happening was bound to happen. There was impunity in Bukedea and beyond imagination. It was a big abuse of the cause for which people died in Luwero," he said.

Col Onange revealed that some residents had previously raised concerns directly with President Museveni regarding alleged torture, arbitrary arrests, and intimidation in Bukedea District.

He also linked Ms Among's troubles to allegations of corruption and unexplained wealth.

"There is no miracle anywhere in the world. No business would give someone such financial muscle to do all those things. Unfortunately, she was never apologetic," he said.

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Finally.
We met the President during the election period and told him about the impunity in Bukedea. We thought the reports were not being acted upon, but perhaps he was taking them into account," Retired Col Joseph Onange, Kumi Hotel proprietor

Mr Joseph Amailem, a former LC3 chairperson in Bukedea District, accused Ms Among of suppressing political freedoms in the district.

"Our sister took us through hell. When she became Speaker, she turned into a monster," Mr Amailem claimed.

He alleged that elections in Bukedea over the last two cycles were heavily manipulated.

"The leaders we have in Bukedea were imposed on us, including herself. We basically did not vote," he said.

Mr Amailem added that some residents who were perceived as opponents of the outgoing Speaker allegedly lost business and or faced intimidation. He said Ms Among's downfall could provide an opportunity for victims to reopen criminal complaints against her and some of her associates.

"I believe there will be freedom and no more intimidation," he said.

Mr Samuel Okello, an FDC supporter in Soroti City, said several people in Teso were still struggling to believe the unfolding events.

"Everything I am reading and watching sounds like fiction because she elevated herself as one of the most powerful people in the country," Mr Okello said.

He claimed Opposition supporters were beaten and detained during previous elections, allegedly linked to Ms Among's influence.

"As a Christian, I pray that God's will be done," he added.

Efforts to obtain comments from key religious and cultural leaders in the sub-region were unsuccessful by press time.

Those contacted included Bishop Mike Okwii Esakan, Bishop Kosea Odongo, and Papa Emorimor, Papa Paul Sande Emolot, who did not respond to repeated telephone calls.



Former Speaker of Parliament, Anita Among. PHOTO/PARLIAMENT X HANDLE