

Letters

LETTERS

A birthday elegy to Rtd Col Dr Kizza Besigye

On this day marked by the quiet arithmetic of time, history pauses not to celebrate a man alone, but to honour a moral institution carved in flesh, tested in fire, and refined by unyielding conviction.

Birthdays, for ordinary men, are reminders of age. For extraordinary men like you, they are indictments of destiny fulfilled in defiance of adversity.

You have walked through the furnace of political turbulence with the composure of a philosopher-warrior. And even now, as the walls of Luzira Maximum Security Prison have intermittently sought to confine your body through multiple periods of detention over the years of your political struggle amounting cumulatively to months, including recent extended incarceration in the course of your continued civic and political engagements; they have failed, spectacularly and irrevocably, to imprison your idea. For ideas, once baptised in sacrifice, cease to be mortal.

You are not merely a man commemorating another year of life. You are a chronicle of resistance. A doctrine of courage. A living contradiction to the myth that silence can be legislated.

From Rwakabengo's humble soil to the commanding heights of national consciousness, your journey has not been one of ambition, but of awakening. You did not merely enter politics you entered history, dragging conscience back into a public space long threatened by convenience, fear, and institutional fatigue.

Physician. Colonel. Presidential contender. Statesman. Dissenter. Prisoner of conscience. Yet above all, custodian of a restless national hope.

To call you an "opposition figure" is to misunderstand the architecture of your existence. You are not opposition; you are proposition. A proposition that dignity is non-negotiable, that governance must bow before truth, and that power without accountability is moral bankruptcy dressed in authority. Across continents and generations, your name has become shorthand for principled defiance. You are Uganda's uncomfortable mirror reflecting both what we are and what we refuse, at great moral cost, to become.

The years have tested you not in comfort but in constraint. Not in applause but in accusation. Not in ease but in endurance. And still, you have emerged not softened, but sharpened; not diminished, but distilled into principle.

You have taught an entire generation that freedom is not inherited; it is defended. That justice is not gifted; it is demanded. That silence, when imposed upon truth, becomes complicity. And that courage is not the absence of fear, but the disciplined refusal to surrender to it.

It would be inadequate to wish you material success. You have already exchanged comfort for conviction. It would be shallow to wish you fame; you are already etched into the moral memory of a continent that remembers its truth-tellers even when it misunderstands them in real time. Instead, we wish you endurance equal to your burden, and historical vindication equal to your sacrifice.

May you witness whether by proximity or through the unfolding of legacy; the dawn of the ideals for which you have been misunderstood, maligned, incarcerated, and yet never defeated in spirit.

We vow, not in sentiment but in solemn civic conviction, that your story will outlive distortion. That your courage will be spoken in homes yet unborn. That your name will not be reduced to political convenience, but preserved as moral testimony in the archives of African conscience.

Let it be known across generations:

That there lived a man from Rwakabengo who refused to kneel before injustice.

That there lived a physician who chose the soul of a nation over personal comfort.

That there lived a soldier who fought not for conquest, but for conscience.

That there lived a prisoner who remained unconfined in spirit. And when the annals of Africa are rewritten with honesty and courage, your chapter shall not be a footnote; it shall be foundational. May time vindicate truth. May truth outlive power. And may power, one day, remember its duty to the people it governs.

Happy Birthday, Rtd Col Dr Kizza Besigye Kifefe.
The Lion of Rwakabengo.

The Rock of National Conscience.

The Unyielding Flame of Democratic Resolve.

In reverence, not submission; in conviction, not fear; in truth, not convenience; we remain.

A Witness to History

The writer is a citizen of Uganda.