

INTERPOL PROBES WOMAN OVER AMERICAN CHILDREN

BY CAROL NATUKUNDA

Interpol is investigating a case in which two American children were allegedly abducted by their own mother, a Ugandan.

Collette Okanya, alias Sheila Komuntale, a resident of Fort Portal is being accused by her American fiancé Charles Richard Ferrao, of taking their children without his consent.

The children are Helena De Ogueira Ferrao, 5 and Henrique De Nogueira Ferrao, 4. According to information on the Interpol website, the children disappeared last year on March 12, in California, US.

Sunday Vision has learnt that the children are living with their mother and maternal grandmother, Evelyn Komuntale in Fort Portal.

Ferrao first reported the case at Long Beach Police Department in California under the case No. 15-16389 1(562)435-611. A felony warrant for child custody deprivation was issued for Okanya on August 25, 2015. Later, the Los Angeles district attorney's office also issued the arrest warrant for Okanya



Photos of the children reported to be missing on the Interpol website

for child abduction.

In an email interview with *Sunday Vision*, Ferrao said on January 24, 2015, he gave Okanya permission to go for vacation with their children in Uganda. She was due to return to the US on March 12, but never returned.

Ferrao is crying foul for his children. He is worried that he might not see them again unless the authorities intervene.

What the mother says

When contacted, the children's



mother denied claims of kidnap.

"Their father knows their whereabouts," Okanya said. She declined to reveal why the children are living here without the consent of the father. "Interpol is aware of the case. The children were registered by the US State Department. I have no comment," Okanya said.

When contacted, Komuntale (the children's grandmother) also said: "How can he say they were kidnapped, yet he tells Interpol and US Embassy that they are with their

grandmother?"

What US embassy says

When contacted, the embassy spokesperson. Christopher J. Brown, said: "Due to US privacy laws, we are unable to provide any comment."

Interpol speaks out

The director of Interpol Uganda, Asan Kasingye, confirmed the case adding that the children are living with their mother in Uganda.

"I know the children and they have even been to my office," Kasingye said.

He downplayed the abduction claims, saying the father of the children had granted Okanya permission to bring them to Uganda.

"This is an estranged couple. She claimed that father of her children is violent and so she decided to stay in Uganda," Kasingye explained.

He confirmed Interpol had issued red notices to arrest the woman and have the children taken back to US, but there is a diplomatic and legal channel to follow.