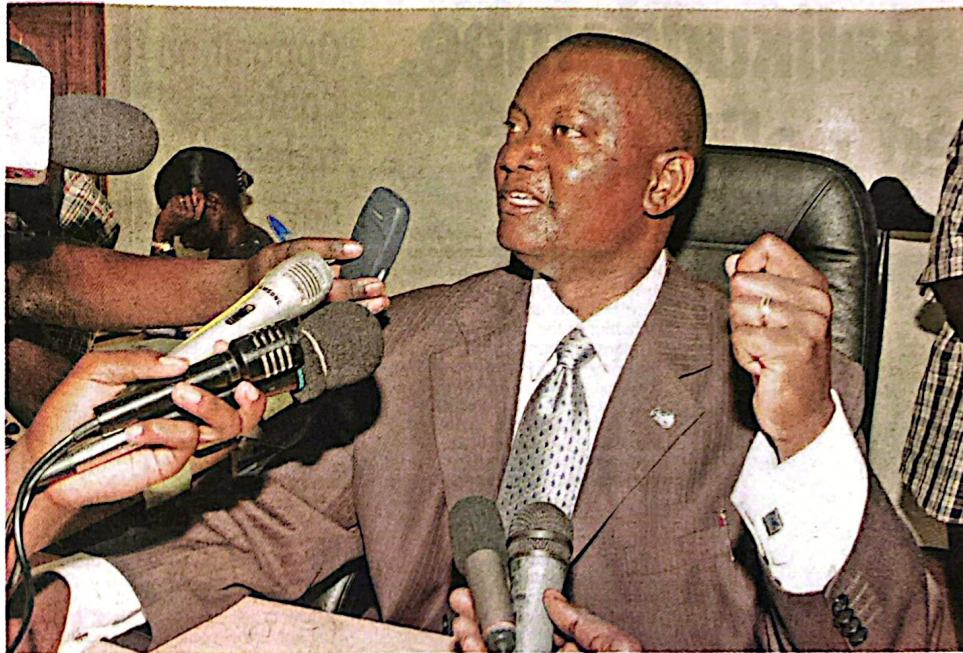




Former Wakiso district resident district commissioner Ian Kyeyune

## Land titles for former RDC, 95 others cancelled

By Andante Okanya

The Lands, Housing and Urban Development ministry has cancelled 96 land titles, including that of former Wakiso district resident district commissioner (RDC) Ian Kyeyune, over irregularities.

The cancellation affects individuals who acquired land in the central forest reserves (CFR) of Kyewaga in Katabi town council Entebbe, Namanve in Mukono and Nonve in Kakiri, Wakiso district.

The ministry has emphasised that the cancellation was implemented because a degazettement process was not conducted, as stipulated by law.

According to a public notice issued by the ministry's partner, the Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda (ACCU), the revocation was based on glaring irregularities and fraudulent acquisitions.

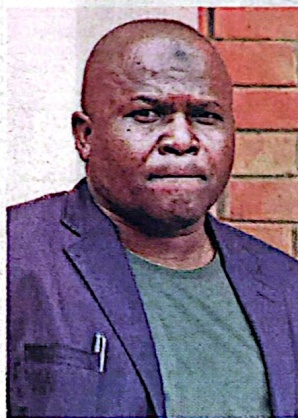
The ministry cited Section 8 of the National Forest and Tree Planting Act 2003 and other enabling laws that guide on forest reserve land use alteration.

"It is upon this background (law on degazettement) that the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, using the powers as provided for under Section 91 of the Land Act (CAP227) cancelled the land titles that had been issued in error," the notice says.

Kyeyune has lost the land in Nonve Central Forest Reserve (CFR) described as FRV Volume 240 Folio 5 Block 226 Plot 46. Kyeyune also served as Wakiso district chairperson before his appointment as RDC after he lost elections to the current district chairperson Matia Lwanga Bwanika.

Kyeyune appears on the list with businessman Haruna Semakula in relation to the cancelled title described as FRV Volume 240 Folio 12 Block 226 Plot 46.

The duo featured prominently during a probe by the Land Inquiry Commission headed by Court of Appeal Justice Catherine Bamugemereire.



Haruna Semakula

On June 21, the commission accused real estate dealer Semakula of being complicit in igniting destruction of 600 acres of Nonve central forest reserve.

A day earlier, Semakula's purported accomplice, Kyeyune, was grilled by the commission and bashed over purportedly using his powerful political connections to acquire government forest land.

ACCU has urged the public to guard against being duped into buying such land. In May, it submitted a memorandum to the Land Inquiry Commission, highlighting the critical need to save CFRs, saying dubious individuals, including public figures, had acquired land titles for parcels of land.

### NFA welcomes title cancellations

Yesterday, National Forestry Authority (NFA) executive director Michael Mugisa, told *New Vision* the land title cancellation gives NFA leeway to stake its claim.

On whether the authority had taken physical control of the land in question,

he said the cancellation implies that the title holders have worthless pieces of paper.

"For some land in the central forest reserves, we have possession and control, but they (irregular title holders) have land titles. This now gives us mileage and leverage. It is irregular to make titles for land in a forest reserve," he said.

"It is unfortunate that some people are getting bank loans with these irregular titles. The lands ministry should style up and stop this. We are spending so much money in courts, battling these irregular title holders," Mugisa added.

On whether any other punitive actions will be taken against the listed individuals, lands, housing and urban development minister Betty Amongi, said the relevant controlling authorities will decide what they deem fit.

"The law empowers us to cancel titles in restricted areas. For any other criminal liabilities, the other authorities like NFA, National Environment Management Authority and the Attorney General, will make a decision on whether to take such action," Amongi explained.

When *New Vision* sought a comment from Kyeyune on his next course of action, he was hesitant to respond, but said he was not aware of such a cancellation.

The ex-RDC wondered why *New Vision* was seeking a comment from him yet the list had many others.

When informed he was a public figure and, therefore, stood out on the list, Kyeyune said he had no knowledge of the development.

"You are picking on Kyeyune, why not others? You are using my name to sell. Do I get commission? Start with others on the list then get to me. Anyway, I don't know anything about that," he said.

"I will answer at the appropriate time when I get a notice from the lands ministry. Right now, I am busy with other things to do," he added.