

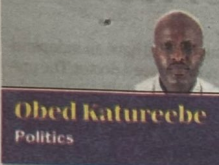
Opinion

Traffic police: It is time to declare operation *towa ujinga*

ately, Uganda has been experiencing gruesome road accidents that are claiming many Ugandans due to what seems to be reckless behaviour by the drivers and riders on the road. Whereas the government has made good progress in constructing paved roads across the country, Ugandan drivers think it is now time to "fly" on these roads.

Ironically, instead of celebrating the benefits that come with better paved roads, we are now constantly crying for our injured and dead because of avoidable road accidents. Therefore, it is my considered opinion that the Uganda Police Force Directorate of Traffic and Road Safety declares 'Operation Towa Ujinga' on our roads.

The highway cameras that we intend to put in place to combat crime should include traffic offences.



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Aggressive driving behaviour takes many forms. Typical aggressive driving behaviour includes speeding, driving too close to the car in front of you, not respecting traffic regulations, improper lane changing or weaving, etc. The list is long. Most accidents on our newly built highways are a result of reckless driving. There is no other form of curbing this catastrophic behaviour other than coming down hard on those found guilty.

Aggressive driving is difficult to define because of its many different manifestations, but having a clear definition is important for police and legal action against it to succeed. A Global Web Conference on Aggressive Driving Issues, organised in Canada in October 2000, offered the following definition: "Driving behaviour is aggressive if it is deliberate, likely to increase the risk of collision and is motivated by impatience, annoyance, hostility and/or an attempt to save time."

One needs to travel to Rwanda by road and realise how Ugandan drivers are not mad after all. From Kampala to Katuna

or Kagitumba, which are border points to Rwanda, our bus drivers are literally "flying". Yet, the moment they cross over into Rwandan territory, they slow down and drive humanly, largely because they know that any senseless driving in the Rwandan territory can make them land penalties that are so punitive.

Therefore, this clearly shows that we have relaxed a lot on stubborn road users, which in a way has bred impudence.

Indeed, we have seen that whenever we have increased vigilance, by traffic officers apprehending some wayward drivers, sanity prevails. The problem is that when we relax along the way. Of course, traffic police do incredible work, especially managing traffic in the city centre, but taming highway drivers has been dismal.

Traffic police has talked and talked tough, but Ugandans (and their indiscipline that seems to have shot over the roof) continue with their bad driving habits. They are still unashamedly driving or riding on the opposite lane, on walkways or pavements, and do not respect traffic lights.

While officiating at the 32nd NRM/A victory day anniversary celebrations in Arua in January 2018, President Museveni decried the bad driving and riding behaviour of Ugandans, which is not only putting the lives of Ugandans at risk, but also scaring away investors in Uganda.

The Uganda Police Force Annual Crime and Traffic Report 2025 indicates that traffic crashes claim an average of 15 lives daily. Despite a 24.4 percent drop in overall traffic offences, serious and fatal crashes rose by 3.7 percent, with 4,602 fatal incidents and 13,563 serious crashes registered.

I have read and heard illogical debates about the cause of most accidents in Uganda. Very absurd when you hear those arguing that our roads are slippery and narrow. True, we might not have six or eight-lane highways like those we see in Europe and other advanced countries, but the size we build is safe enough if we only exercise road discipline.

As a matter of urgency, traffic police must enforce speed governors in all vehicles, especially those that ply the long routes. Second, the highway cameras that we intend to put in place to combat crime should include traffic offences, as it happens in the developed world. These cameras should be able to relay images of those driving dangerously to the control rooms, for them to be apprehended before they cause accidents.

The writer works with the Uganda Media Centre.