

UHRC rebukes police over brutal arrests

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KAMPALA. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) has called for investigation into what it called brutal arrests by the police and other law enforcement agencies, demanding that the officers involved be punished.

Mr Med Kaggwa, the UHRC chairperson, said the rights body had registered cases where police are accused of using excessive force in Kampala Metropolitan area and across the country, especially in handling suspects during peaceful assemblies, protests and demonstrations.

"The commission is concerned that despite its interventions and repeated reminders of their constitutional obligations, the use of excessive force by some police officers has persisted both in Kampala Metropolitan area, as well as some areas upcountry. This needs to be taken to another level," he said.

Mr Kaggwa, who was briefing

the media on what the rights body termed as "recent human rights concerns in the country" at the UHRC offices in Kampala yesterday, also highlighted cases of use of live bullets by the police in quelling demonstrations and human rights concerns arising out of the forced eviction by KCCA law enforcers.

"We are not condoning criminal acts in the city because we all need a peaceful place to stay, what we are talking about is observing how the police and KCCA law enforcement agencies are handling the law without observing the criminals' human rights," Mr Kaggwa said.

The UHRC statement also cited the July incident where police constable Cana Nkumuhebwa reportedly shot dead Paul Tumukunde after a disagreement in Sembabule District. Other cases highlighted include use of live bullets by the police during a student strike at Old Kampala Secondary School last month where a student, John Arinaitwe, was injured.

Speaking about the ongoing de-

bate on the controversial Constitutional Amendment Bill and the presidential age limit, Mr Kaggwa criticised the police for violently dispersing citizens who gather to express their views for and against the issues.

"The commission is cognisant of the role that citizens play in matters of governance, which rights and activities are guaranteed under Article 38 of our Constitution as long as they are peaceful. Article 29 of the Constitution further guarantees freedom of speech and expression, unarmed assemblies and demonstration. We urge that all the incidents that have seen these rights violated; hence loss of lives and different depravities, be investigated and those responsible held accountable," Mr Kaggwa said.

Commenting on the recent death of a vendor who drowned in a city waste channel while she attempted to flee from KCCA law enforcement officers, UHRC called upon KCCA to compensate the family and set standard and long-term remedies to the problem of trade order in the city.