Journalists raise alarm on road carnage at Julius Kitone's vigil

BY DAN WANDERA

KAMPALA. The rising toll of road crash fatalities dominated tributes for fallen journalist Julius Kitone, as members of the media fraternity, friends, and politicians gathered in Kampala for a vigil, urging swift and decisive action to rein in reckless driving.

Kitone, a reporter with NBS Television, was among eight people who perished in a fatal crash on February 13, at Kibega Village on the Mbarara–Lyantonde highway. The crash has since reignited debate over road safety and what many described as a preventable loss of life.

Friends and colleagues held a vigil at Kuka Restaurant in Naguru, Kampala, where mourner after mourner described the rising road carnage as untenable and blamed it largely on human error and careless motorists.

Mr Samson Kasumba, a news anchor at NBS Television, said society has become complacent in the face of reckless driving.

"We have become complacent and often blame road accidents on narrow roads. If we widen the roads, we are creating a larger space for reckless drivers. The problem may not be the narrow roads entirely," Mr Kasumba said.

"How many of us have sat in a car driven recklessly and remained silent? Driving is about a collection of decisions, about speed and when to overtake or not," he added.



The accident scene on the Mbarara-Lyantonde highway where eight people died in a road crash on February 13. PHOTO / COURTESY

Police preliminary findings

The Rwizi Region Police Spokesperson, Mr Samson Kasasira, said the crash occurred at around 5.30pm and involved a Toyota Hiace registration number UBQ 016U and a Mercedes-Benz Actros trailer registration number KDQ 668L/ZH 5133.

Preliminary investigations by traffic police indicate that the driver of the Toyota Hiace, who was travelling from Mbarara City, attempted to overtake at a corner section and collided head-on with the trailer that was in its proper lane.

Eight people died on the spot, while one survivor was rushed to Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital with serious injuries.

The incident adds to growing traffic statistics that continue to show human error as the leading cause of road crashes.

Calls for speed cameras

Speakers at the vigil also revisited the suspended Automated Electronic Penalty System (EPS), which had introduced speed cameras and automated fines in 2025 before being halted following public outcry over what motorists termed exorbitant charges.

Many stakeholders who had previously opposed the system now said it may be time to reconsider stricter enforcement measures.

"When statistics show that about 80 percent of road tragedies are caused by human error, then something must be done about the individuals we share the road with," said Ms Alice Alaso, a former legislator and secretary general of the Alliance for National Transformation.



Late Julius Kitone

"It doesn't matter how careful you are if the other road user is careless. That other person can cause mayhem," she added.

Speakers urged the government to reintroduce speed cameras and enforce stringent penalties for traffic offenders, arguing that writing about road crash statistics alone will not save lives.

Kitone, who died at 35, will be remembered as a passionate journalist with a special interest in human-interest stories, environment, and climate change reporting.

His journalism career began in 2017 in the Greater Luweero districts of Nakasongola, Luweero, and Nakaseke before he relocated to Kampala to join NBS Television as a news reporter.

Colleagues described him as professional, calm, and committed to telling community stories with depth and sensitivity.

Kitone was laid to rest yesterday at his ancestral home in Kiterede Cell, Ntalamuki Town Council, Rakai District.

As tributes continue to pour in, mourners said his death, like many others on Uganda's highways, should serve as a wake-up call for stricter enforcement, responsible driving, and collective action to end what they termed a "preventable epidemic" on the roads.

2024

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Road carnage statistics

The fatal road crash that claimed eight lives on the Mbarara-Lyantonde highway on February 13, 2026, came barely one week after another fatal motor crash that claimed nine lives on the Mityana-Mubende highway on February 8. While the original number of deaths from the Mityana-Mubende accident was six, who died on the spot, three other injured passengers died shortly after evacuation from the accident scene, said Mr Lameck Kigozi, the Wamala Region Police spokesperson. The accident involved a commuter taxi and a bus.

The 2024 annual crime police report registered a total of 25,107 road crashes in 2024, compared to the 23,608 crashes in 2023. The report also revealed that 4,434 of the crashes in the year 2024 were fatal, while 13,134 were serious and 7,539 were minor accidents. The report also pins the crashes to careless overtaking and speeding as leading causes of the road crashes.

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