

while on a campaign trail is likely to

his political rival Dr Kizza Besigye, Mr Museveni preached the gospel

(Shs500b), Women (Shs234b) and Microfinance (Shs180b).

# Luweero tells NRM to stop skulls campaign adverts

BY MONITOR TEAM

editorial@ugnationmedia.com

**LUWEERO/MBALE/BUDAKA.** The ruling National Resistance Movement leaders from the districts in Luweero Triangle, the main frontline for the 1981-86 National Resistance Army (NRA) guerilla war that brought President Museveni to power, have asked the Electoral Commission (EC) to stop the NRM from using skulls in its media adverts.

The campaign material, they noted, constitutes intimidation and blackmail.

In meeting with EC officials at Luweero Town Council Hall ahead of next week's presidential and parliamentary elections, leaders from Kayunga, Luweero, Nakasongola, Nakaseke, Kyankwanzi and Nakasongola districts said splashing the skulls of their dead on national and social media has a chilling effect and would most likely scare away voters.

The skulls have been used on some local TV stations.

"We believe the Electoral Commission has the powers to vet cam-

paign messages [and disallow] those that send negative signals at a time when we should be preaching hope and peace after the election exercise," Mr John Ssegujja, a civil society activist, told the meeting last Tuesday.

However, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) officials defended the use of the skulls of those who died during the war in the party's campaign adverts, which they said shows the "liberation war history in which more than 500,000 people died due to bad leadership which should not be repeated."

"The use of the Luweero war skulls should not scare anybody since it is a historical fact. We are only reminding the country that poor choice in the coming election can take the country back to war," Mr David Kamugisha, the NRM district registrar, told the meeting.

Mr Museveni began the war to protest what he said was a rigged elections of 1980, which returned Milton Obote, then exiled in Tanzania, to power. Gen Tito Okello Lutwa overthrew the Obote II government, before Mr Museveni toppled the

latter six months later in January 1986.

## 1996 experience

The President's use of the skulls in campaign adverts is not new. In the 1996 elections, the current Senior Presidential Advisor on Media, Mr John Nagenda, engineered publication of the Luweero skull photos in the government-owned *New Vision* to flag that if Paul Kawanga Ssemogerere was instead chosen, State power would slip back into the hands of masterminds of the Luweero killings. Tuesday's meeting in Luweero unanimously resolved to formally task both the EC and the Media Council to scrutinise all campaign messages and ban those that are offensive.

"There is no doubt about the liberation war during which lives were lost but the timing of such adverts, even when media houses are paid, should be controlled. Our people think differently and are likely to get scared when war drums are sounded. Election messages should be positive," Mr Bwanika Baale, a Luweero District chairperson can-

didate, said.

The Rev Fr Simon Ssesanga, on behalf of the Uganda Joint Christian Council, tasked the EC to compel the main presidential candidates to preach hope during and after the polling dates.

North Central Regional Election Officer Jenina Sabiti, who represented the EC chairperson, Dr Badru Kigundu, assured the stakeholders that the ongoing distribution of Voter Location Slips had been extended to parish level to ensure that voters are able to access the slips before the polling day.

In Mbale District, Poverty Alleviation and Community Development Foundation, a civil society organisation, tasked presidential candidates to strongly condemn and restrain their supporters from engaging in divisive politics and violence.

In Budaka District, voters voiced concern over the late introduction by the EC of the Biometric Voter Verification System [BVVS] technology to sieve eligible and ineligible voters at polling stations, warning that a system malfunction could delay the exercise and stir trouble.