

Medics worried about land probe acid victim's condition

By Carol Kasujja

Amos Katureebe, the Mbarara municipality councillor for Nyamityobora, lies on the hospital bed in great pain with severe wounds and a swollen face.

Unknown assailants attacked Katureebe last Wednesday night, a day before he was to testify before the land probe commission about the giveaway of the Government's forestry land. The assailants splashed acid on him, burning his face, hands and stomach.

And the doctors are worried his condition might deteriorate.

Katureebe was rushed to Mbarara Hospital and later transferred to Mengo Hospital in a critical condition.

The fear

Doctors at Mengo Hospital are worried that Katureebe could have swallowed some of the acidic chemical, which could damage the internal organs.

"I picked interest in his case and we admitted him although we do not have a burns unit because Mulago Hospital doctors were on strike. Since he was brought here, he has remained positive but when we look at his mouth, we suspect he could have swallowed some chemicals, which might burn internal organs and the throat. That is very dangerous," said Dr Ezra Nnunda, a general physician at Mengo Hospital.

Dr Nnunda noted that surgeons who have visited Katureebe are hopeful that they will restore his eyesight. Before the attack, Katureebe had one eye, having



Katureebe has asked the Government to help him clear the skyrocketing hospital bills

lost sight in the other eye earlier.

"I am calling upon the Government to help me clear the hospital bills, accommodation and provide something to eat for my children. I have young children and they all depend on me," Katureebe said. Katureebe is also worried that the assailants might attack his family members.

"I heard that the suspect is going to be released on Police bond. He knows where I am receiving treatment from. What if he looks for me and finishes my life," Katureebe said, adding:

"The Government should help me. I have children at the university and I have been paying almost sh5m for their tuition. Who is going to pay for them now, I need to be protected."

Katureebe can neither see nor eat. He only drinks water and juice. He is married with two wives and six children.

Pauline Kyankunda, Katureebe's wife, said: "Yesterday his face was okay but this morning, it started swelling. I am also worried about my children at home. The attacker might come back to take their lives. The hospital is also expensive, we

really need your prayers and support."

Dr Medard Bitekyerezo, the National Drug Authority board chairman, visited Katureebe at Mengo Hospital and promised to work with the medical team to ensure that his life is out of danger.

"It is a tight situation because Mulago burns unit doctors are on strike. We are going to work with different doctors to save his life. Though he is in pain, he is a strong man. I am happy that he can still talk," Bitekyerezo said.

Katureebe was supposed to testify last Thursday before the



Pauline Kyankunda, the wife

Justice Catherine Bamugemereire commission in the case involving the giveaway of the Mbarara central reserves forests land to individuals.

He was on Wednesday night attacked from his compound in Kakoba division, Mbarara district.

Why the attack?

It is not clear whether the attackers targeted him for opposing grabbing of government land. The attack also came after a warning issued by Bamugemereire who, during a public hearing, revealed that they had received information that some powerful people in the area were threatening witnesses who were supposed to testify before the commission.

Police arrested Mbarara municipality speaker Bonny Tashobya Karusya in connection with the acid attack. The arrest was reportedly based on information given by the victim.

Justice Bamugemereire assured Katureebe's family that her commission would ensure that the perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted.