



Prof George W. Kanyeihamba Learned View

After the 2016 elections, Uganda will never be the same again

Forget the false prophets, exaggerators and political pundits. The crowds which attended last Tuesday's presidential rallies branded by the media as "the last push for votes", indicated quite clearly that the real competition for the presidency was between Gen Yoweri Museveni and Dr Kizza Besigye.

The Electoral Commission (EC) claimed it was neutral and fair in the way it conducted these elections, but when Gen Kale Kayihura's police brutally intercepted Besigye from whispering glad tidings to his supporters in Kampala and one person was shot dead in the chaos, police revealed the ugly and unacceptable face of unfairness.

They detained Besigye for a long time and beyond the understanding of normal human beings, ordered him and his enthusiastic fans to march eight miles back to Kasangati, his residence, and restart his journey back to Makerere University knowing the FDC candidate would miss that rally since he would reach Kampala by night and be arrested again.

No Ugandan of common sense can believe that the police were carrying out their constitutional or legal duties. Unfortunately, for NRM's candidate Museveni, many Ugandans who had hitherto been uncommitted or lukewarm about Besigye's candidature were driven by the police to support the FDC candidate as the remaining

champion of liberty and rule of law.

The Electoral Commission refused to comment on this terrible episode and its tragedy but no surprises here.

Contrast the behaviour and illegal acts of the police towards Besigye and his supporters when they indulged in undignified silence when candidate Museveni ignored the law and regulations of the Electoral Commission in relation to the manner and time of presidential campaigns.

Museveni was reported to have campaigned during the night in Gulu and Jinja and EC boss Badru Kiggundu kept silent.

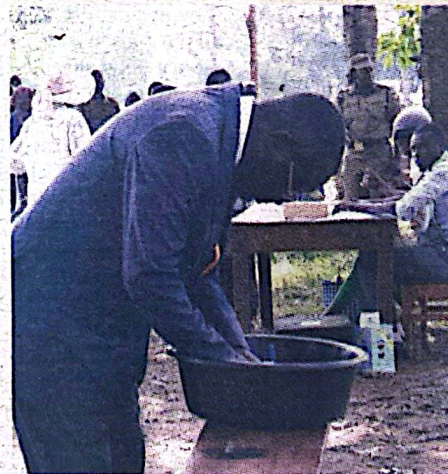
Other events occurred which were inexplicable and for which the police gave incredible explanations.

Independent candidate Amama Mbabazi's head of security Christopher Aine disappeared in what the witnesses, including family members, claim was the police who took him away. The police, who denied the claims, revealed that Aine was hiding but all their efforts to find him have failed.

Gen Kayihura publicly pledged Shs20 million to the person who leads them to him alive. Aine's uncle pledged more than twice that amount (Shs45 million) to whoever would find him alive or dead.

Up to now, the police have hunted for him

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here and there, and everywhere without success. The police even denied that a dead body found in a hospital mortuary was that of Aine. They contradicted Aine's own relatives who believed and said the body was of Aine. Ugandans became baffled as to who to believe; police, or Aine's relatives.

The other incredulous story by police was that an FDC parliamentary candidate in Ibanda had gone into hiding when he was reported missing.

Then again, no Ugandan of balanced mind would believe the police story if he or she knew what had happened to that candidate. He had hosted a Besigye rally in his constituency at which a mammoth crowd had voluntarily appeared compared to an earlier Museveni rally.

It is not logical, therefore, for the police to say a candidate who was so popular and presumably has been elected would hide. His own version of what actually happened – that he was kidnapped – appears to be more credible.

Candidate Museveni's rally at Kololo Independence Grounds was not as complementary to his efforts and work as he or his supporters would have wished. On the other hand, Besigye's last rally and the enthusiastic reception his supporters showed must have encouraged him and those who believe in him that he would easily score victory this time round.

In consequence, most Opposition supporters expect Besigye to win the presidential election race with a clear majority while Museveni's supporters hope for a rerun.

Other Museveni supporters expected him to win outright in the first round but with a perilous majority. No matter who wins or comes top, the cry that the elections were rigged could be the loudest since general elections began in the Republic of Uganda.

Will the UPDF then stand up to the challenge? That is the question on the minds of Ugandans and their friends today. In light of previous precedents and recent appointments and promotions in the Judiciary, the fate of any petition or petitions is easily predictable.

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