

LETTER OF THE DAY

When the 'lifestyle audit' returned with a vengeance

Five years ago, when former Inspector General of Government Beti Kamya Turwomwe proposed lifestyle audits for public officials, Uganda reacted with a mixture of laughter, anxiety, and quiet discomfort.

Some dismissed the idea as political theatre. Others feared where such a principle might lead in a country where visible wealth often appears disconnected from official income.

Even President Museveni appeared cautious. His response at the time was revealing. He reportedly argued that if officials had acquired money illegally, it would still be preferable for them to invest it within Uganda rather than stash it abroad. It was a pragmatic, almost philosophical response — one that exposed the difficult balancing act between fighting corruption and preserving economic circulation within the country.

But this weekend, that old debate returned with vengeance.

The events surrounding former Speaker Anita Among — popularly branded "AAA" — overwhelmed and underwhelmed the country at the same time. Social media exploded with shock, satire, and celebration. Political camps repositioned themselves overnight. Yet beneath the noise lay a far deeper revelation about Uganda itself.

For years, corruption has been discussed as though it were an unstoppable social disease beyond anyone's control. Yet almost every major anti-corruption institution in Uganda ultimately points back to the State:



the IGG, State House Anti-Corruption Units, CID, Parliament committees, the Auditor General and presidential directives.

This weekend exposed an uncomfortable truth: the power to confront corruption in Uganda has always largely rested in the hands of the State itself.

That is what made the moment psychologically seismic.

Ugandans have long lived with the assumption that once one enters the inner sanctum of power, they become untouchable. Convoys become normal. Mansions become ordinary. Public curiosity dies. Fear replaces accountability.

Then suddenly, the same machinery appears to turn around and ask the very question Beti Kamya asked years ago: "How does one's lifestyle match one's known income?"

And the country freezes.

What, especially unsettled many Ugandans, was not merely the investigation itself, but

the dramatic intensity surrounding it. The raids, searches, media spectacle, and public exposure carried the atmosphere of a political earthquake rather than a routine civic process. One could almost feel the country collectively whispering: "If this can happen here, then nobody is truly untouchable."

That is why many Ugandans felt both overwhelmed and underwhelmed.

Overwhelmed by the sheer scale and symbolism of what unfolded.

Underwhelmed because many quietly suspect the issue is not corruption itself but changing political temperatures around corruption.

In countries where institutions function independently and consistently, anti-corruption investigations become ordinary civic procedures. But in systems heavily dependent on political activation, anti-corruption enforcement can resemble

weather patterns: calm today, storm tomorrow.

And perhaps that is the real lesson Uganda should take from this moment.

Not that corruption exists. Ugandans already know that.

Not even that powerful people can fall. History has taught that repeatedly.

The deeper lesson is that the machinery capable of confronting corruption has always existed. The State has demonstrated that when it chooses to move, it can move decisively, dramatically, and without warning.

Which leaves Uganda facing a deeply uncomfortable question:

If the tools were always there, what exactly has been missing all along?

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