

African court doubles Pistorius' sentence to more than 13 years for killing girlfriend + Court okays government, doctors' negotiations

BY MICHAEL ODENG

The High Court has blocked a move by the labour unions to stop the Government from negotiating with Uganda Medical Association (UMA) on how to improve the working conditions of health workers.

On Friday, the registrar of the civil division of the High Court, Sarah Langa, dismissed the application on grounds that negotiations between the health workers and the Government had been concluded.

"This application has been overtaken by events since it was filed during the negotiations between the Government and UMA. Commitments have already been made. I, therefore, dismiss it," Langa ruled. The registrar said each party will bear its costs.

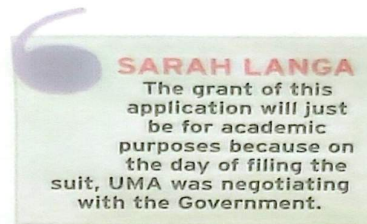
She observed that the letter that



Dr Sam Lyomoki

was presented to court from the state minister of finance, David Bahati, dated November 21, showed that a resolution had been reached between the Government and UMA.

Langa said the letter indicated that the Government had agreed to pay doctors in public health facilities duty facilitation allowances. This is as part of the commitment to call off



the strike which has paralysed health services across the country for two weeks.

Other offers include payment of senior house officers (doctors studying master's degree), who have not been earning salary for their work in the hospitals during their time of study.



Dr Ekwaru Obuku

"The grant of this application will just be for academic purposes because on the day of filing the suit, UMA was negotiating with the Government," Langa observed.

She advised the National Organisation of Trade Unions and Uganda Nurses and Midwives Union to pursue the main suit, which will look into the legality of the actions of

UMA president Dr Ekwaru Obuku and Workers' MP Dr Sam Lyomoki. The main application has been fixed for hearing on January 8, 2018. The labour unions were represented by Richard Rwaboogo.

According to the labour unions, it was illegal for Ekwaru and Lyomoki to engage the Government in negotiations over the doctors' strike because they had no mandate to do so.

Earlier, State Attorney Jackline Amusugut, who represented the attorney general, maintained that UMA was not a registered trade union and has no mandate to call for a doctor's strike.

"It is the principle of the state to take all the necessary steps to involve people in consultations as a strategy to end the strike," she submitted.