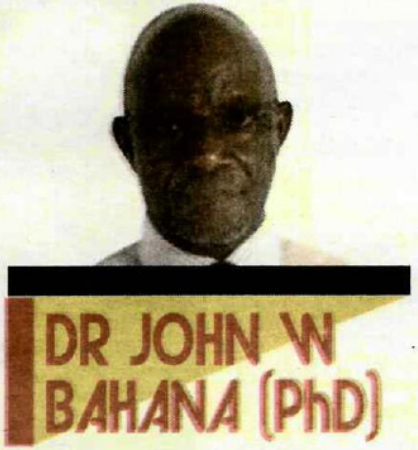
How Luwum's murder forced Ugandans in droves to Kenya



The recently celebrated public holiday to honour Archbishop Janani Luwum and the remembrance days have connotations of upheaval in our Ugandan society. The celebrations have rushed memories that I wish to share with *New Vision* readers, largely for its historical and factual context, but also as a witness and victim.

When Luwum was murdered on February 16, 1977, at the hands of Idi Amin, some notable eyewitnesses say Amin himself shot him; his killing generated a huge wave of Ugandans moving into exile that no doubt highly accelerated the ouster of the Amin military regime, two years later in 1979.

The Amin regime was an unforgettable nine-year period in all aspects of political and social life in our nation. His rule is severally described by historians, journalists and academic analysts as one of the most brutal in modern recorded African history; the butcher of Uganda, totalitarian dictator of African history, and more.

Author, Okello Lawoko, in his book, *Dungeons of Nakasero*, reports how Luwum's body was riddled with bullets, some through his mouth, evidence against the advanced concoctions of the government mouthpiece, the *Voice of Uganda* newspaper.

The Amin brutality that had started with his military coup of January 25, 1971, hit its apex when he murdered the head of the Anglican Church in Uganda, which, at the time, was estimated at 30% of the total population, below the Catholics at 42%. In fact, Archbishop Luwum was also the head of the church in Rwanda, Burundi and Boga Zaire (in DR Congo).

These facts did not matter or deter Amin from an act that shocked the world and generated waves of disbelief in Ugandans, mostly, and in neighbouring countries. Amin had previously murdered enough Ugandans not to feel any sense of shame. He was a man who paraded a former minister of information, Alex Ojera, in an almost nude state before the media at the present-day Sheraton Kampala Hotel and announced to all and sundry that the former minister had been caught in guerrilla activities.

Ojera had always been known for wearing highly smart suits. But here he was, bleeding, not allowed to say a word, at least to say goodbye to his family and now accused of insurgency. That picture is permanently engraved in my memory and sends tears that are difficult to resist. I wish, hope and request that the Acholi sub-region name a public institution, street or whatever, in memory of Ojera. I shall be there to sign the memorial plaque.

Back to the Luwum murder. Many Ugandans responded in an unbelievable, but clearly not co-ordinated, manner. Some felt their own lives threatened, others were disgusted at the action of a government that was expected to protect the lives of citizens, going totally bare-knuckles to kill religious leaders, the economic doldrums that had hit the country, leaving shops totally empty of all essential commodities, including salt, sugar and beer, of course, never mind church wine.

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The writer is a scientist and author. His autobiography, 'Survival of the Fittest', is available at Aristoc Bookshop.