

Mbale town clerk implicated in land grabbing scandals

By Paul Watala

The Land Inquiry Commission has described Mbale municipality deputy town clerk Kenneth Khaturi as a self-confessed criminal and warned him against aiding people that grab public land and open spaces in Mbale municipality.

The commission, headed by Lady Justice Catherine Bamugemereire, also threatened to arrest Khaturi over contempt and trying to dodge questions from the committee members.

This was as he appeared before the commission at Resort Hotel in Mbale town yesterday.

Commissioner Frederick Ruhindi said Mbale municipality authorities lack moral authority to take charge of the municipality because they failed to protect government land and other open spaces.

Ruhindi said Khaturi is a self-confessed criminal, who connives with his junior officers to sell or grab land and other open spaces in town, adding that some of the plots are allocated to their families and friends.

He warned Khaturi to stop telling lies and assigning blame to other parties, but accept that he was behind all the mess in Mbale town, adding that Khaturi was also part of the racket that is causing confusion.

"You have made the commission believe you are part of the system that has helped to disorganise the town. You allow people to grab land without reporting the matter to the inquiry commission, yet you are aware of what it does," he said.

Ruhindi said Khaturi had been in charge of the municipality for 12 years, but did little to restrain and report



Khaturi appearing before the land commission yesterday

land grabbers. He added that instead of mentioning at least one land grabber, all Khaturi could do was protect them, a sign that he was part of the system.

Bamugemereire described municipality authorities as unserious and incompetent for failing to bring Mbale municipality to order, adding

that criminals had taken over the town.

She said unplanned developments have mushroomed while the responsible authority has done nothing. She added that all sanitary lanes and sewerage lines have been blocked by illegal developers.

Bamugemereire tasked

Khaturi with telling the commission the people behind the selling of Gidima Road in northern division and open spaces, such as Uhuru Park, Children Lion Park, Lorry Park and Golf Course, as well as other two open spaces on Busoga and Nkambo lane in Indian quarters in industrial division.

Bamugemereire also wondered why Khaturi was protecting thieves, saying it was a sign he was sharing the fruits on the expense of the poor and the Government.

"Do not joke with this commission. It is not here to play. You have failed to take control of your subordinates, hence making the municipality lose billions of shillings through forgeries of receipts," Bamugemereire warned.

She also tasked Khaturi with explaining why he had failed to take action against Sarah Wazemwa, who is suspected

of forging municipality receipts.

"Mbale used to be the best-performing and cleanest town in Uganda. However, because of bad leadership, recently, it was ranked the worst performing municipality.

"You have scared away your sons and daughters from investing in Mbale because of your dubious acts," Bamugemereire said.

Defence

However, Khaturi denied cases of conniving with land grabbers. He instead blamed the former Uganda Land Commission secretary, Mubala Samuku Pangoli.

"Mubala is to blame for the mess and rampant land grabbing cases because at the time he was the commissioner, people flooded our offices with titles, claiming ownership of the plots in Uhuru, Lorry Park and other open spaces."