

FDC candidate promises better pay for army

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LUWEERO. Forum for Democratic Change presidential candidate Kizza Besigye has promised to end what he calls discrimination within the army and offer the soldiers better terms of service and a clear career path if he is elected on February 18.

Dr Besigye was on Sunday evening campaigning in Luweero District, where the war that brought President Museveni to power, was waged between 1981 and 1986.

Having been exiled in Nairobi, Kenya, where he was working as a medical doctor, Dr Besigye joined the rebels in 1982 and retired from the army in 1999 after authoring a divisive document, titled 'An insider's account of how the Movement lost the

broad base'.

After authoring the document, he was threatened with trial before the army court for breaching army discipline but was later discharged from the army, after which he declared his first presidential bid for the 2001 elections.

During the campaigns for that election, he claimed he had the support of 90 per cent of, especially the rank and file soldiers, a statement that put him at loggerheads with Mr Museveni and some top leaders of the army.

Speaking at his main rally in Luweero Town, Dr Besigye said: "We want soldiers to work in dignity, just like people in other jobs. It is only the high-ranking officers who are in a good condition; the rank-and-file soldiers are suffering."

He claimed there is discrimination in promotions and gen-

eral treatment of soldiers.

Dr Besigye promised to increase pay for soldiers and improve their housing conditions in addition to clarifying the career paths for the different categories of servicemen.

"We want someone to be in the army knowing what he is

"You find somebody who has spent 20 or 30 years without being promoted (while) his counterpart who has just joined the army becomes a general in a short time. You meet a sergeant who has a car while a major, just because he is not in favour, is walking on foot," KIZZA BESIGYE, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

likely to become and what he has to do to become what he wants to become," he said.

Speaking in a field overlooking the main army barracks at Bombo earlier in the day, Dr Besigye castigated Mr Museveni's government over what he called failure to improve the barracks buildings.

"This barracks was built by (Idi) Amin. These people have been here for 30 years but they have never even put on a coat of paint."

This comment drew applause from Dr Besigye's listeners at Bombo, many of whom share ethnicity with Amin.

Dr Besigye also promised to deal with the problems of former fighters, to whom he made a direct appeal:

"Veterans, wherever you are, we have a few days left and your situation will be handled."