

Don't be duped: RDC jobs are not for sale

Last week, I was alerted to the activities of a clique of unscrupulous individuals who have been soliciting money from unsuspecting Ugandans with false promises of appointment as resident district commissioners (RDCs), deputy RDCs and assistant RDCs. By the time this criminal ring was uncovered, Obadiiah Mugabi, a resident of Nambaale in Iganga district, had already lost sh2.7m to Juliet Nganda, a resident of Bweyogerere in Wakiso district.

As the line minister, I find these revelations not only disturbing, but also profoundly offensive to the values of our state. Soliciting money from citizens in exchange for public office is a crime — plain and simple. It is fraud and corruption in their rawest and most cynical form. Worse still, when such criminal conduct is falsely linked to the presidency, it directly taints the image of the Office of the President, which the Constitution rightly recognises as the fountain of honour and authority in our republic.

Ugandans must be clear on this matter: no public office, least of all that of RDC, deputy RDC or assistant RDC, is for sale. Any individual claiming otherwise is a conman and a criminal.

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni has, over the years, distinguished himself as a relentless champion in the fight against corruption. He has consistently and publicly castigated corruption in all its manifestations, whether in government or the private sector.

That commitment is not rhetorical. It is reflected in the numerous anti-corruption initiatives he has championed and the many individuals — both inside and outside government — who have been investigated, prosecuted and jailed for abusing public office or soliciting bribes.

It is, therefore, unimaginable that acts of such crude corruption could be tolerated within the Office of the President. To

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suggest otherwise is either a gross misrepresentation of facts or a deliberate attempt by criminals to hide behind the good name of the Presidency.

GUARD AGAINST GULLIBILITY

Ugandans are, by nature, a hopeful and enterprising people. Indeed, this optimism has earned our country a reputation as one of the most enterprising societies in the world. However, in moments of economic pressure and political transition, many citizens understandably look to public service as a dignified avenue to serve their country and earn a livelihood. Unfortunately, it is precisely this hope — and at times desperation — that criminal elements seek to exploit.

The fight against corruption, therefore, is not only the responsibility of law enforcement agencies; it is also a civic duty for every citizen. As the President has often guided, corruption thrives when there is a willing giver as much as a willing receiver. One of the simplest ways to defeat common is through basic knowledge of how government processes operate.

In the case of RDC appointments, the truth is straightforward and verifiable. There are clear, structured and confidential procedures followed in the appointment of RDCs, deputy RDCs and assistant RDCs. This process is handled by the Presidency strictly on the basis of merit, suitability and national interest.

No individual — inside or outside government — can 'book' or 'secure'

such a position for another person in exchange for money. Indeed, genuine appointees only become aware of their appointments after the process has been concluded and formally approved by the President himself.

It is also important for the public to appreciate the constitutional timelines. The current political term is still running and will end once the President is sworn in for the next term in May. Thereafter, a new Cabinet will be appointed, followed by other appointments, including those of RDCs, in an orderly and constitutional manner.

Claims that people are currently collecting money to influence such future appointments are not only false, but deliberately misleading and damaging. It is simply too early — and entirely reckless to engage in such speculation.

CRACKDOWN HAS ALREADY STARTED

It is against this background that the arrest of Juliet Nganda should be understood. She is alleged to have revealed that she was working with a wider group that also involves Idi Kaggwa from Kalangala. These arrests send a clear and unambiguous message: the long arm of the law will catch up with anyone who seeks to enrich themselves by deceiving peaceful and hardworking Ugandans.

Regrettably, similar acts of deception also explain why, in 2022, some individuals publicly accused unnamed "people in the Presidency" of

soliciting bribes to secure RDC jobs; only for those same complainants to later miss out on appointment lists.

What many did not appreciate then, and what must be clarified now, is that these accusations were largely fuelled by criminal middlemen who took money, failed to deliver, and then hid behind the name of the Presidency to mask their fraud.

This time around, the Presidency will not tolerate corruption that is attributed to it by virtue of such unscrupulous actors. Those who use the good name of the President and his office to con *wananchi* will be pursued relentlessly, exposed publicly and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

In conclusion, I wish to thank our dear President, Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and the Chief of Defence Forces, Gen. Muhoozi Kainerugaba, for their firm and consistent stand against corruption. It is this uncompromising spirit that guides the Presidency. It is with this resolve that we shall continue to fight all those who seek to deceive, exploit and steal from the people of Uganda.

The *wananchi* deserve honesty, integrity and leadership they can trust — and that is exactly what the Presidency stands for.

The writer is the Minister for the Presidency



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