# Museveni also imposing himself on Ugandans – Opposition

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

**KAMPALA.** A section of Opposition politicians has criticised President Museveni over his recent remarks warning political and religious leaders against imposing themselves on the people, arguing that the President's own record contradicts his message.

The criticism follows Mr Museveni's address on Monday during the 49th St Janani Luwum Day commemoration in Kitgum District, where he urged leaders to seek legitimacy through persuasion, good service delivery and tangible results rather than intimidation.

Speaking to *Daily Monitor* yesterday, Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) president Patrick Oboi Amuriat said Mr Museveni's rise to power and continued stay in office amount to political imposition.

"Museveni has never listened to the people he governs. He came through a coup, challenging the status quo that he described as leadership that had imposed itself on the people by not conducting free, fair and equitable elections," Mr Amuriat said.

He added that the President altered constitutional provisions to extend his rule.

"When he came, he promised to be in power for four years, but he kept changing the goalposts of the Constitution under the full control of the regime, removing term limits and age limits. That is imposing yourself on the people," he said.

## Credibility of elections

Mr Amuriat also questioned the credibility of elections held during Mr Museveni's tenure, arguing that Ugandans have not been given a fully free environment to choose their leaders.

During the commemoration, Mr Museveni said leadership founded on intimidation betrays the will of the people and weakens institutions.

"Influence people by doing good things which they see and appreciate. All these leaders, even now the ones who try to intimidate, are really like Idi Amin, who imposed himself and ended up assassinating many Ugandans, including Janani Luwum," Mr Museveni said.

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– Patrick Amuriat, FDC president

Mr Peter Walubiri of the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) said the President's comments were contradictory.

"He stated the right principle, but he is the culprit of that abuse. After losing the 1980 election, he did not challenge the results in court. Instead, he went to the bush. That is how he imposed himself," he said.

Conservative Party president Ken Lukyamuzi said the debate boils down to electoral credibility and public trust.

"The real test is whether people are free to choose their leaders. When elections are followed by widespread complaints, the legitimacy of the winners comes into question," he said.

However, Mr Faruk Kirunda, the deputy presidential press secretary, said President Museveni has both the moral authority and legitimacy.

"He came by the gun to restore constitutional order which had totally broken down. We got a new Constitution in 1995. In 1996, he was elected under the new Constitution and has since gained renewed legitimacy every five years, latest being last month when he won with the highest percentage since 1996," Mr Kirunda said.

He added: "In eight years of Amin's rule, there was no single election. Every decision was imposed by decree. Let the young people ask their parents if they ever voted on anything under Amin."

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