

The ruling follows an inquiry conducted last May, into complaints of marginalisation raised by the Nubian and Kebhu communities in Arua City and Zombo District.

BY SHABIBAH NAKIRIGYA

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has directed the government to implement constitutional protections for marginalised communities in West Nile Sub-region following findings of systemic discrimination and exclusion against the Nubian, Kebhu, and Lendu communities.

In a ruling delivered on Monday at the Commission's offices in Kampala, EOC Commissioner Denise Tusiime said the Commission found that despite constitutional guarantees on equality and recognition of indigenous communities, minority groups in the region continue to face unequal access to education, employment, governance, land rights, and public services.

The ruling followed a public inquiry conducted on May 12, 2025, into complaints of marginalisation raised by the Nubian community in Arua City and leaders from the Kebhu community in Zombo District.

During the hearings, a witness identified as the prime minister of the Nubian community told the Commission that members of the group had endured

EOC directs govt on Nubians, Lendu rights

decades of political and social exclusion.

"We do not have a place we call a homeland. We are marginalised and underrepresented politically. Our people do not get jobs and promotions despite being qualified," the witness testified.

EOC ruled that the respondents had engaged in systemic discrimination in violation of the community's constitutional rights to equality, cultural identity, and participation in public affairs.

Ms Tusiime directed the government, through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and other relevant agencies, to operationalise the constitutional recognition of the Nubian community within 12 months.

The directives include formally recognising the community in government records, policies, and administrative systems, facilitating the gazettelement of a



EOC member Denise Tusiime.
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Nubian cultural institution, and ensuring public agencies treat Nubians as a distinct ethnic group in planning, service delivery, and affirmative action pro-

grammes. The Commission clarified that the ruling does not create a new ethnic group but instead compels the State to implement an already existing constitutional status.

The Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development was also ordered to establish a multi-sectoral taskforce within six months to investigate allegations of historical land dispossession and recommend measures for restitution, compensation, or resettlement.

Authorities in Arua City were further directed to reform governance and recruitment structures to ensure equitable representation of ethnic minorities, including Nubians, in public institutions and employment systems.

The EOC also instructed the National Identification and Registration Authority, the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control, the Judiciary, and the ministries of Health and that of Education to address language barriers, improve access to identity documents and public services, and promote inclusion of the Nubi language in education and public institutions.

Mr Celestino Mengu, the speaker of the Kebhu Kingdom in Zombo, told the EOC that minority communities in Uganda continue to suffer historical injustices dating back to the colonial era.

He narrated how members of the Ke-

bhu community were denied access to education when missionaries arrived in the area in the 1950s.

"There were no schools in Kebhu-speaking areas. I personally walked nearly 12 miles to school. We studied in Alur, and whenever I mistakenly spoke Kebhu, I was caned," Mr Mengu said.

"We applied for a seed secondary school, but construction has never started. Parents spend a lot of money taking children to distant schools," he added.

Mr Mengu also raised concerns over political exclusion, saying several educated members of the community fail to secure leadership positions because of their small population size.

"Some of our educated children aspire for political office, but because of our low numbers, they rarely succeed. We ask district authorities and service commissions to be sympathetic to minority communities," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr Amin Akida, the speaker of Mulki Ta Nubian, who represented the Nubian community from Arua, described the proceedings as a major turning point for communities seeking recognition and equal treatment.

"We do not look at this as an ordinary case. To us, it is an advocacy platform," Mr Akida said.

He criticised misconceptions portraying Nubian identity as a religion rather than an ethnic group.

"In Uganda, we know the major religions as Catholic, Protestant, and Islam. There is no religion called Nubi; Nubians are predominantly Muslim, but not all Muslims are Nubians," he explained.

Mr Akida lauded the EOC for supporting marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities.

KEY DIRECTIVES

- Officially recognise the Nubian community in government systems
- Gazette a Nubian cultural institution
- Improve representation of minorities in public institutions
- Investigate historical land

- dispossession claims
- Improve access to education, health services, and identity documents
- Address language barriers in public service delivery
- Promote inclusion of the Nubi language in education and institutions