

Boy killed by girlfriend's father had been warned



The house where Martin Bukenya was killed by the father of his girlfriend. PHOTO/IBRAHIM KAVUMA

A resident explained that Bukenya was a frequent visitor to the girl's home until January, when Mr Herbert Lumu, allegedly caught him inside the house and warned him never to return.

BY BENSON TUMUSIEME

Literature reminds us that unchecked anger can turn homes into prisons and love into lamentations. A classic example is Martin Bukenya's death, a tragedy that mirrors the sorrow of Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers in *Romeo & Juliet*, as Juliet once cried, "O, I have bought the mansion of a love, but not possessed it."

In Wakiso District, the names are different, but the grief is similar. When we visited the village yesterday, residents said Bukenya had been warned against following Christine Naziwa, 14, to her home.

A resident explained that Bukenya was a frequent visitor to the girl's home until January, when her father, Mr Herbert Lumu, caught him inside the house and warned him never to return.

"Martin was found sleeping in the bedroom with the girl, actually we even called the area defence secretary, who came, sat with the father of the daughter and counselled the boy and instructed him never to come back," a resident said.

He took none of it. It was love first, then danger later. On Valentine's Day, Bukenya, 18, teeming with teenage love, arrived at the home of Naziwa in

Mabanda Cell, Gombe Division, Wakiso District, bearing a gift for the love of his youth. But instead of exchanging tokens of affection, he met his untimely death at the hands of her father, turning a day of love into a night of lament. His life ended like a rose cut in its prime, and the flower he had delivered did not mean much.

Bukenya, a student of Hillside Secondary School Matugga, Wakiso District, and resident of Kirinyabigo, Kawanda in Nabweru Division, Wakiso District, survived to be slain in January when he visited his girlfriend at her father's home.

Residents knew Bukenya as the boyfriend of Naziwa, a daughter of Mr Lumu. Bukenya and Naziwa attend the same school.

Romance turns tragic

On February 14, Mr Lumu, a frequent traveller and businessman dealing in shoes, returned home from South Sudan. Before reaching his house, he met Naziwa and the maid in Matugga Market and asked them whom they had left at home. The maid allegedly replied that they had left their uncle there. Suspicious, Mr Lumu proceeded home to establish who that "uncle" was. On arrival, he met Bukenya, whom he had warned a month earlier never to return.

It is reported that Bukenya tried to escape but failed, resorting to hiding in the bedroom where he was found and beaten to death.

Several residents said they heard cries for help around 9pm. They tried to break the windows and doors to save the boy, but it was in vain; the house had been locked from inside.

Neighbours said when Mr Lumu realised the boy had weakened, he opened the door and told them how Bukenya had come back twice seeking his daughter.

"I identified the boy and recalled how he was beaten from the same

GROWING TREND

A total of 1,339 cases of murder by assault were reported to police in 2024 compared to 1,142 in 2023, marking a 17 percent increase. According to the report, 1,340 persons were assaulted to death: 1,091 male adults, 156 female adults, 69 male juveniles, and 24 female juveniles.

house a month ago and warned never to come back. Few minutes later, we looked for Lumu and he was not seen. A neighbour went and checked on the boy and confirmed that he had actually died. We called the Defence Secretary who came and called police as well," one of the neighbours said.

Mr Hamis Kizito, the Defence Secretary of Mabanda cell, told this publication: "I was attending the burial from another cell, I left and proceeded to Lumu's home, I found the dead body of the boy that I knew in the front of the house (shade), the body was undressed, I called the police and informed them about the incident."

It is alleged that the deceased had brought a valentine's gift to his girlfriend and stayed in the house until late at night, when he was found by her father.

Mr Kizito explained that he called the police, who arrived around midnight but lacked a Scene of Crime Officer (SOCO).

"I was left with five policemen to guard the home, the other two went back to look for a SOCO. They returned at 3am, documented the scene and took the body to City Mortuary Mulago," he said.

Ms Robinah Nalujja, the village chairperson, condemned Mr Lumu's act, describing it as "uncontrolled anger of a parent that has no place in society."

"It's alleged that Lumu married his wife when she was just 13, and his daughter is now nearly 18 so how can you reach an extent of killing someone for a circumstance you have a history about," she added.

Ms Emelda Nakiyemba, the mother of the deceased, explained that on the day of the incident, her son had been with her at her business at Ham Shopping Grounds in downtown, Kampala. Two of his friends asked him to go to Nakivubo Stadium to watch a football training.

Ms Nakiyemba said when she reached home at 9pm, Bukenya had not returned, and his phone remained switched off despite repeated calls.

"At around 10:30pm, I received a call from his school director in Matugga telling me that my son was killed. It sounded strange because I was with him in the city centre, I rushed to the scene and found my son already dead," she said.

Bukenya's mother now seeks justice, accusing police of failing to arrest the prime suspect, Lumu, and his daughter, who are reportedly in hiding.

"I am seeking justice because it looks like police have not yet done enough to arrest Lumu and his daughter. I call upon human rights bodies to help me because my son was killed yet he was innocent," Ms Nakiyemba said.

Kampala Metropolitan Police Spokesperson Rachael Kawaala confirmed that the victim succumbed to injuries sustained during the assault.

"Following the incident, the suspect reportedly fled the scene together with his family, efforts are ongoing to trace and arrest him," Kawaala said.

Bukenya was buried in Kanoni, Masaka, on Tuesday, February 17.

Murder by assault in urban cities is multifaceted, influenced by social, economic, and psychological factors including alcohol and drug abuse, family disputes, mental health challenges, and failures in social support systems.

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