

Human rights commission calls for calm

By Jeff Andrew Lule

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) has called on the public to remain calm over the current debate on the proposed amendment of Article 102 (b) of the Constitution to lift the presidential age limit.

The agency's chairman, Meddie Kaggwa noted that there is no need for fear or panic.

"We call on Ugandans to stay calm over this age limit debate. There is no need for panic. People should be tolerant to each other," he noted.

Kaggwa said this while addressing journalists at the UHRC offices in Kampala yesterday.

He advised all divergent groups to avoid trading insults during their gatherings; but to stay focused on real issues not to incite violence.

Police discrimination

Kaggwa also called on the Police to avoid double standards while handling age limit protest groups.

"We are equally concerned by the way some groups are handled and have been consistent on this. If somebody has committed an offence and is not armed, we think the measure of force used should be equal. I was seeing clips on televisions, and in some cases people are handled in proportionately," he noted.

Kaggwa said those opposed to the amendment are badly handled compared to those who support it, saying it is a sign of discrimination.



Arnold Mwesiwa

He said the Police have displayed double standards in handling the matter, which raises suspicion.

He asked the Police to allow both groups enjoy their rights to freedom of assembly and speech.

Army deployment

Meanwhile, Kaggwa also noted that issues of army deployment in the city can be answered by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and the Police since it is their mandate to protect people and their property.

However, the Police spokesperson, Asan Kasingye, said the deployment of military Police in the city is normal and only meant to ensure order in the city.

Since Monday, there has been visible heavy deployment of military Police and anti riot Police in various parts of the city.

Local government

Speaking at the same briefing, Kaggwa said the UHRC together with other Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are also going to review the performance of local governments towards service delivery.

This is the fourth annual national conference on economic, social and cultural rights aimed at checking on government's compliance with international treaties.

The event is to be held under the theme: *Local Government and Service Delivery in Uganda: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward* at Makerere University Main Hall from today and ends tomorrow.

Kaggwa said for 30 years, the National Resistance Movement (NRM) has promoted the decentralisation policy assumptive of taking services closer to the people.

Arnold Kwesiga, the co-ordinator of Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability, said the current local governance structure suffers from broader institutionalisation challenges, where real power and mandate of all state agencies and structures are suppressed.

The executive director Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, Salima Namusoba, said they also want to analyse whether the creation of many districts has improved service delivery.

The event targets up to 600 participants including policy makers, corporate actors, private sector, researchers and academicians.