CORPORAL PUNISHMENT: SCHOOL CLOSED, HEADTEACHER ARRESTED

By Luke Kagiri

Education authorities in Mityana district have ordered the closure of a primary school and handed its headteacher to police after a Primary Seven pupil was allegedly severely injured during corporal punishment.

The school, Bright Way Junior School, located in Nalyamagonja village, Kalangaalo sub-county, was closed after the incident involving 14-year-old pupil Irene Nabatanzi.

The district inspector of schools, Patrick Kiggundu, said the authorities took swift action after learning about the incident.

"We immediately closed the school and issued a closure notice to the teachers. We handed the matter to police and we have been following up on the progress of investigations," Kiggundu said.

Police have since arrested the school's director and headteacher, Fredrick Amooti Bukenya, who is accused of assaulting the pupil.

According to pupils at the school, Nabatanzi had been accused of stealing money from a fellow pupil's suitcase. The matter was allegedly reported to teachers, who later referred it to the headteacher.

Bukenya allegedly caned the pupil for several minutes before tying her hands and legs with ropes and confining her to a bed overnight as other pupils watched helplessly.

"Bukenya admitted that he had punished the child," Kiggundu said.

PHOTO BY LUKE KAGIRI



Nabatanzi supported by Mwanjuzi (right) and relatives as she is taken to hospital

The following morning, Nabatanzi was rushed to Kyamusisi Health Centre before being referred to Bukuya Health Centre in Kassanda district and later to Mityana General Hospital due to the severity of her injuries.

While at the hospital, relatives shared images and messages on social media showing the girl's condition, which prompted the Deputy Resident District Commissioner, Prossy Mwanjuzi, to intervene.

Kiggundu said the victim had been referred to Mulago National Referral Hospital for specialised treatment, but was returned home because her parents said they could not afford the costs.

When Mwanjuzi later visited the girl's home, she found her lying in pain in the compound, being assisted by relatives.

"We must find a way of getting this girl back to the hospital without fail," she said, urging local leaders and health workers to work together to ensure she receives proper treatment.

Mwanjuzi also visited the school to speak with teachers and pupils about the incident, with several confirming what had happened.

She recommended the temporary closure of the school and directed teachers to co-operate with local leaders to ensure that boarding pupils returned home safely.

The Wamala region police spokesperson, Lameck Kigozi, confirmed that Bukenya had been arrested.

"He is facing charges of aggravated corporal punishment administered to one of the pupils at his school," Kigozi said.

Police said the victim has since undergone further medical examination and that investigators are awaiting guidance from the Resident State Attorney on the appropriate charges to be preferred against the suspect.

BETWEEN THE LINES

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