

I am not privileged, says Bamugemereire



Appointed. Justice Catherine Bamugemereire

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KAMPALA. Justice Catherine Bamugemereire, who is set to lead the probe into the allegations of corruption in the Lands sector, has dismissed claims that she is favoured by President Museveni over her colleagues in the Judiciary.

Justice Bamugemereire, who was in 2015 appointed as Constitutional Court/ Court of Appeal judge, has in less than five years chaired three inquiries. She led the Kampala Capital City Authority tribunal in 2013 and recently investigated Uganda National Roads Authority (Unra), only to be appointed to lead a commission of inquiry into land matters in the country last week.

In an interview with *Daily Monitor* at her office in Kampala yesterday, Justice Bamugemereire said her duty is to her country and that it was the prerogative of the President to choose who he deems fit to serve. She said it was not her place to question the President's decisions.

"I look at this as a service, a service that takes a lot of my time. I would want to travel and look after my children whenever I have sometime but I can't do that when I am chairing a commission. We get very restricted during times of the commission; it is a service that comes with a lot of pain and sacrifice. I don't think it is a nice thing to be in the view of cameras," she said.

Justice Bamugemereire said she was being judged unfairly given that some of her predecessors had chaired more than one commission.

"I am not the first judge to do three commissions. If you look into our history, Justice (James) Ogoola had almost I think three commissions, Justice Sebutinde had three..." she said.

Between 1999 and 2003, Justice Julia Sebutinde chaired three commissions which investigated allegations of corruption in police, the Ministry of Defence and the Uganda Revenue Authority, respectively. Justice James Ogoola on the other hand chaired the presidential commission of inquiry into misuse of Global Fund money for Aids, Malaria and Tuberculosis.

She said she would be "happy not to do it anymore" as long as there are people who can serve.

Justice Bamugemereire, who has previously been accused of being biased and unfair, said those doing so are merely "testing the process."

Her report on Unra was recently challenged in court by, among others, Dott Services Ltd and General Nile Company for Roads and Bridges, who said it contained falsehoods, unfounded allegations and was biased against them.