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Makerere staff protest cutting down of their campus gardens

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KAMPALA. Makerere University staff residing within campus have protested what they described as crude methods deployed by the university administration to cut down their banana plantations.

The exercise, which started at the weekend, has seen a number of banana plantations around staff quarters demolished by men hired by the university.

One of the affected staff, who preferred anonymity, told this reporter that on Monday, he saw machete-wielding men approaching his garden, which forced him and his family members to run away, leaving their house unattended too.

He said on return, some of their property had been taken.

"It was not necessary for the university to demolish our gardens where we earn a living. Besides, our properties have been stolen and we do not know where to start from," he said.

However, the deputy vice chancellor for finance and administration, Prof William Bazeyo, who issued the order, told *Daily Monitor* yesterday that Makerere is not a farmland.

Not a farm land

"Makerere is not a farmland where people conduct their farming from. That is why we are demolishing not only banana plantations but also other food stuffs on campus," Prof Bazeyo said in a telephone interview.

However, Mr Deus Kamunyu, the chairperson of the Makerere University Academic Staff Association, said it was not necessary for the university to use goons to demolish gardens.

"We want to record our disapproval of the uncivil methods deployed yesterday in a bid to clean up the plantations on campus. Members were disheartened by machete-wielding goons in a university space and at war with food plants. We are partners in cleaning up and we will support cleaning in every way but we don't need to deploy methods of thuggery," Mr Kamunyu said.

SECURITY SPEAKS OUT

The head of security, Mr Enoch Abeine, said the men who conducted the exercise were hired by the Estate and Works department. Mr Abeine, however, said staff complaining about the loss of their property should report to the police. The university in December instructed staff with illegal structures to demolish them before it takes action.