



Pax Musevenica... For the gods and my president

Asuman Bisiika Minority Report

The leopard has had more social proximity to humans than the lion. There are more folk tales and adages with leopard characters than lions.

In Kampala's popular idiom currency, the 'leopard' refers to a particular man with a known address. This reminds me of a certain Marshal Mobutu of Zaire who changed his country's national animal symbol from the lion to the leopard.

It is a leopard thing here... A Mukonzo may swear *ngakuha ngwe* (death at the hands of the leopard) or *ngakuha kasinini* (death at the hands of dysentery). And as late as we were growing up in the 1970s, these were common usage swear phrases among the Bakonzo.

But my mother never swore on the talons of the leopard and dysentery because, as I came to learn later, her great grandfather was killed by a leopard and her grandmother died of dysentery.

My awe and owing reverence to the leopard is well known. In fact,

I don't like the martial and muscle nature of predators; least of all the big cats.

And for fear that the Kampala leopard may strike me, I have dropped 'The Leopard King of Zambunda' as the working title of an essay I am writing for a publication on Uganda's current politics. I just fear the leopard, you know. And by the way, the first novel I read was titled, *The Leopard* by Cecil Borker (or some such name). I must have been in P5.

In Kasese, a stray bullet from a police officer's gun killed a 13-year-old child called Muzamir Kuule. Someone told me Kuule's parents were NRM supporters and they are likely to have voted for candidate Museveni.

Kuule's family is in a dilemma now. How do they reconcile the death of their child and their love for Museveni?

If they play their cards well, Kuule's parents will be compensated by Museveni (sorry, by the

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government) for the loss of their child. But they need someone to guide them on how to go over the claim for compensation.

Will the family be happy after receiving the compensation? Oh yes, how else not? You know, it could have been worse if one of Kuule's parents was the one who was killed. Kuule's parents will console themselves that they will produce another child. "Sad," you say? No, because that is our sad lot as Ugandans; we will go to any

lengths to rationalise government mistakes.

Of course there will be no investigations into the circumstances under which young Kuule was killed; ditto for the guy who was killed in Wandegaya on February 16. But didn't police provide transport for the dead body and Shs3 million for the burial costs? Oh yes, thanks to the gods, they did. Amen! Why are Ugandans offering all these compromises? It is for the gods and president. Of course there is no country to talk about anymore; what we have now are the gods and the president.

If Kuule's parents petition court, the state will offer an out-of-court settlement and offer monetary compensation. So Kuule's death will be balanced out with monetary compensation. Good? Oh yes, how else not? Yet whereas the family may need that monetary compensation, knowing what happened and sanctioning whoever fired the killer bullet is also important.

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Mr Bisiika is the executive editor of East Africa Flagpost.