

US condemns killing of Besigye supporter

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KAMPALA. The United States government has condemned Monday's confrontation between police and Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) presidential candidate in which one person was shot dead and scores injured.

In a statement issued yesterday, a US State Department spokesperson, Mark Toner, also said they "were deeply concerned" that police detained Dr Kizza Besigye and later teargassed his supporters.

"Such restrictions on public assembly, especially when applied disproportionately to one side contesting the elections, escalates tensions in an already heated electoral environment," Mr Toner indicated.

"So we urge all government authorities, as well as all political parties and their supporters, to refrain from further acts or rhetoric that may lead to more unrest or claim any more lives," Mr Toner said.

Chaos erupted on Monday after police blocked Dr Besigye, a four-time presidential contestant and

main challenger to President Museveni's 30-year rule, from addressing mini rallies downtown Kampala, which they said was a disturbance to traffic flow. The environment turned confrontational and police fired teargas to disperse the crowds.

Later, they arrested Dr Besigye, briefly booked him at Kira Road Police Station and drove him to his home in Kasangati in Wakiso District.

More and more chaos

Dr Besigye, however, later drove back to town to address a scheduled rally at Makerere University but police, helped by outfits in the military, stonewalled him around Wandegaya, a Kampala suburb, which exploded into more chaos.

Police justified their actions, saying Dr Besigye had violated the laws, changed the traffic routes that had been assigned to him earlier, and insisted on using another course leading into the Central Business District.

While addressing journalists in Kampala on Monday, the police spokesperson, Mr Fred Enanga, said

Dr Besigye was only restrained from disrupting business in the Central Business District.

At least one person, later identified as Emmanuel Musisi Nsubuga, was shot dead and 22 others injured during the melee. Some of the injured were admitted to Mulago hospital, where access has been restricted to the media.

The US government said they hoped that "such senseless death will not be part - or repeated rather - as Ugandans head to the polls."

The Monday incident was also condemned by both local and international election observers.

Other players urged

Dr Besigye, addressing journalists on Tuesday, appealed to regional and international players to speak up about what he said was a deteriorating environment ahead of the elections.

"We have a local saying here that you should not let the baby who you are going to carry on your back to first get covered in mud," he said in remarks directed at regional states and the international community.