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NRM is fighting for its life, not corruption

As we speak, the outgoing Speaker of Parliament Anita Annet Among is no longer in the running for the speakership of the 12th Parliament. The ruling ...ional Resistance Movement (NRM) is fronting outgoing Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs Jacob Oboth-Oboth.

Among's movements are reportedly restricted and she is under investigation, allegedly for corruption and abuse of office.

Her residences were cordoned off and searched by security agents throughout the weekend, and some valuables confiscated. There is a lot of speculation about the motive and what has been found so far.

There is talk that President Museveni is finally making good on his promise to fight corruption once and for all. Why now, of all times?

Museveni in the past, has spoken glowingly about the capacity of corruption in creating a middle-class, which is necessary for a democracy. The corrupt have been shielded from lifestyle audits and many re-appointed or promoted.

He praised the corrupt, claiming they invest their money in the country and create jobs. Most of this is disingenuous, to say the least.

Corruption mainly creates and equips a critical mass of individuals with money and power.

It also forms hordes of needy folks who are vulnerable and easy to load it over.

The main role of the created, corrupt class is to perpetuate the government in power by mobilising the masses and sabotaging any form of Opposition.

The power and opportunity for quick enrichment is not an end for themselves.

It is a means to promote the ruling party to stay in power for long.

If their corruption and enrichment is used to, say, buy off the Opposition and scuttle plans that threaten the existence of the government, however outrageous, it can be overlooked, justified and defended.

If it helps the ruling government to strengthen its position, say by creating parallel networks that are more powerful and effective than the established ones, then it is still okay.

That is why armed men moving in unmarked omnibuses nicknamed 'drones,' who abduct people and torture them to safe houses, are untouchable. But if any of those drone 'operators' does their own mission, say to extort a ransom or abduct a government supporter, the very system that created them will go after them.

The woes of Among are almost similar. The power she has wielded over the years as Speaker has given her largesse and licence. She has used this to mobilise a huge following among MPs, the political class, religious groups, and the business community ostensibly for Museveni and the ruling party.

The problem is that this mobilisation and accumulation of wealth has happened within a short time of joining the ruling party, after abandoning the Opposition.

Moreover, Among was rising at a critical time in the evolution of the NRM.

Corruption has weakened the State and breached governance systems. The Judiciary and the Legislature are almost bereft of serious power.

You can hardly use known scientific and managerial tools to monitor, evaluate, and assess their viability. The same applies to individuals within the system. Now there is high dependence on rumours, suspicion, and fake intelligence.

Besides, the corruption system which, for years, has been used for patronage, has now perforated the social safety net.

Coming out to probe their wealth at this time is an opportune affront on suspected corruption. But it is also a sign that the NRM is now feeling vulnerable that even its own shadow scares it.



Nicholas Sengoba
Plainly speaking

Service delivery is low or non-existent, with the general picture being poor roads, schools, hospitals, housing, employment and security of persons and property.

You now have armies of mostly energetic, young, angry people.

The government is now defending itself and fighting its own citizens. The show of strength and reliance on hard methods is a last resort.

It is striking with its back on the wall from a point of threat and weakness.

The strong kick from a dying or injured animal. After 40 years in power, with Museveni aging and a transition forced on him by biology, many within the system are smelling blood or are perceived to be doing so.

The problem is if those described above are the 'wrong ones' or if they are suspected to be too ambitious and act in ways that outshine the master, they become targets.

Among with her million-dollar Rolls-Royce and reportedly huge amounts of money she has been doling out at every opportunity, is definitely going to attract a lot of interest as one outshining the master.

If as alleged, the Rolls Royce was a gift from someone outside Uganda, which entity or person takes the risk of dealing with someone (Among), who is sanctioned internationally? What is their motive?

Considering that most Ugandan presidents have been sponsored and maintained in power by foreign hands, this vehicle and 'unexplained' money was likely to raise eyebrows.

For 40 years, NRM has managed to stay in pole position because it has obliterated most of the power centres as Uganda knew them before 1986. The military is no longer in the hands of people predominantly from northern Uganda.

The public service, professional, business classes, and the one holding land plus benefiting from agriculture have progressively moved away from southerners and ethnicised towards the ruling western class.

The emerging new power centre is the one that has benefited from primitive accumulation of wealth or using State infrastructure to enrich and empower themselves.

It can buy and influence anyone in the broken system of the State.

Some, like Among become of interest because they not only have money but have also become very influential for being in significant public offices. Coming out to probe their wealth at this time is an opportune affront on suspected corruption. But it is also a sign that the NRM is now feeling vulnerable that even its own shadow scares it.

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