Why court halted burial of Masaka tycoon, his two children

By Charles Etukuri and Hannipher Namuwonge

The High Court in Masaka yesterday ordered that businessman Bosco Ssenyonjo and his two children, who perished in a road accident on Monday, be kept at Masaka hospital mortuary until March 26, when a judgment on their burial site will be delivered.

Ssenyonjo, popularly known as Bitanda, plus his children, 20-year-old Sherinah Nankindu and 17-year old Simon Trevor Ssenyonjo, died in a road accident on the Masaka–Entebbe highway on Monday.

Following the incident, the family members disagreed on where the trio should be buried. Ssenyonjo's mother, Maria Nakayiza, wants her son to be buried at their ancestral burial grounds at Kyalusowe village, Mukungwe sub-county in Masaka city, while the widow, Jane Nabukeera, who is also the mother of the two deceased children wants the trio to be buried at her home.

"As a family, we believe our loved one should be laid to rest at the ancestral burial grounds, in accordance with our traditions," Nakayiza said.



Simon Trevor Ssenyonjo



Bosco Ssenyonjo



Sherinah Nankindu

The deceased's brother, Mike Ssenyonga, said Ssenyonjo was their family heir and that customs demand that he cannot be buried elsewhere except on the ancestral land.

The presiding judge, Victoria Nakintu's directive, comes after she urged all parties to resolve the matter amicably.

"This is a sensitive family matter involving people who belong to the same home and share the same cultural values. It would be in everyone's best interests to reach a peaceful and mutual understanding without further conflict," she said.

Earlier in the day, the matter had been referred to Grade One Magistrate Enock Kyegombe for mediation, in vain. This was after Nabukeera rejected an earlier proposal to have Ssenyonjo buried at his family's ancestral grounds and the children at her preferred location.

The agreement collapsed at the signing stage after Nabukeera declined to sign it, prompting, Justice Nakintu to order that all three bodies be kept in the mortuary, pending the final ruling on March 26.

At the time of the accident, Ssenyenjo was reportedly driving Nankindu to Entebbe International Airport to travel to India for further studies.

Nabukeera, who was also travelling in the same vehicle alongside her other daughter, Sharon Ssenyonjo, survived the crash. Sharon is still admitted in hospital after sustaining serious injuries.

The bodies were initially transported to Ssenyonjo's home in Masaka city on Monday.

Close friends said Ssenyonjo had reportedly fallen out with some of his family members after they attempted to sell the ancestral burial grounds.

They said the deceased chose to buy his own land in Mukungwe-Kaddugala, where he wanted to be buried.

On Tuesday, Nabukeera went to the ancestral burial grounds in Kyalusolwe village, where the bodies had been taken, but other family members chased her away.

Nabukeera insisted that Ssenyonjo and the children should be buried at their new home.

When she met resistance, Nabukeera ran to court for help.

Through her lawyer, Alexander Lule, she asked court to block the burial at the ancestral burial grounds in Kyalusowe.

"The family members acted in a manner that disregarded the wishes of my client. They used force to take away the bodies and proceeded with burial arrangements without her knowledge or consent, which is both unfair and unlawful," her lawyer said.

Nabukeera also asked court to ensure that the bodies are removed from Kyalusowe and taken to the mortuary, saying there were plans by the defendants to bury them illegally.