

elections

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UN's Ban Ki-moon decries irregularities in polls

The statement. In a statement released on his behalf, the Secretary General called upon all political actors and their supporters to resolve any disputes that might arise in an atmosphere of peace, through established legal procedures.

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KAMPALA. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said the world body stands by findings of international election observer groups, the European Union and Commonwealth, which noted widespread irregularities that marred Uganda's presidential polls held last Thursday.

A spokesperson for Mr Ban Ki-moon, Stéphane Dujarric, released a statement in New York on Tuesday night in which the Secretary General called upon "all political actors and their supporters to resolve any disputes that might arise in an atmosphere of peace, through established legal procedures."

"The Secretary General takes note of the findings of the international observation teams that stated that the elections were largely peaceful yet identified a number of shortcomings and irregularities. The secretary general echoes these concerns while commending the voters for their participation and commitment to the process," the statement reads.

Mr Ban called upon the "Ugandan authorities to ensure that all claims and concerns related to the process are handled in a fair, expeditious and transparent manner".

Uganda is part of the 193-member inter-governmental organisation headed by Mr Ban whose main objectives are to promote international cooperation. President-elect Yoweri Museveni, a principal ally of Western powers on matters of regional security, was last Saturday declared winner with 60.8 per cent poll victory with his main challenger FDC's Kizza Besigye receiving 35 per cent of the vote.

However, FDC insists Dr Besigye

won the election and have since slammed the results declared by the Electoral Commission as a sham. The European Union and Commonwealth observer groups, in their assessment reports, said the exercise was marked by a blatant lack of a level playing field, voter intimidation, a biased Electoral Commission, incidents of violence and harassment of Opposition politicians.

Similarly, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva, Switzerland separately told journalists on Tuesday that the office is alarmed by the continued "intimidating display" of the police and machinegun-wielding military personnel, and their conduct as has been exhibited in the recent days in the crackdown on Opposition politicians and besieging of FDC party headquarters in Najjanankumbi.

Ms Pouilly put specific emphasis on the repeated arrest of Dr Besigye, who since last week has been arrested and detained at least nine times. She also expressed concern about former

prime minister Amama Mbabazi whose movements are restricted.

Kampala Police Metropolitan spokesperson Patrick Onyango has told this newspaper that Dr Besigye is arrested whenever he is bound to cause trouble. "He says he wants to go to EC but his intentions are very different," Mr Onyango said. He, however, did not provide any proof of the police's claims. As a signatory to various international human rights instruments, the UN advised Uganda to stick to its obligation "not to unduly restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly."

Meanwhile, Botswana president Ian Seretse Khama's government has also tendered a note to the Ugandan authorities affirming the findings by international observers, citing last Thursday's polls as having fallen "short of democratic principles."

"The government of Botswana remains deeply concerned that such conduct during an election would have deeply undermined the norms of best practice governing demo-



Mr Ban Ki-moon

cratic elections, as well as, the continent's efforts towards consolidation of democracy."

The note issued through the country's ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, however, urged "all concerned parties to address the election disputes for the peace and stability of their nation."

Botswana's Consul in Kampala Maria Odido DiFonzo told this newspaper that, notwithstanding this, what they want to see "is all parties reach dialogue."