

Ugandans to the rescue



4/22/2011

Baby shot dead

MUseven made good on his threats, he will shoot to kill to stay in power



Last week Museven's security forces tear gassed a two year old who was rescued by the Red Cross. This time the devil showed it's true colors. Residents of Masaka hold a bleeding baby called Gift, who was shot as security operatives dispersed people who were demonstrating in the Walk-to-Work campaign on Thursday. The two-year-old infant, who was shot in the head and chest, was pronounced dead by doctors at Masaka Hospital shortly after.

Posted By Musa

The unexpected finish to two-year-old Juliana Nalwanga's life was sharp and brutal. Two of many bullets fired by Museven's security forces dispersing protestors in downtown Masaka town, yesterday ripped through her head and chest.

Part of her brain spilled on the forehead as blood streamed all over the body. Within minutes, the toddler, fondly called Gift, was kicking in the air, gasping for breath where acrid and suffocating teargas smell dominated. Moments before, she was a lively kid running in the family compound satisfied after breakfast.

The mother, overcome by sorrow, looked on helplessly at the way state actors' excessive use of force was snatching a precious life - and with it the family's dreams. A rush by sympathizers to resuscitate the infant bore nothing. Quickly, they put her in a vehicle for emergency treatment at Masaka Hospital, but was declared dead on arrival.

HELP IS ON THE WAY

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Baby Nalwanga becomes the fifth person allegedly killed by security forces since the opposition-led 'Walk-to-Work' demonstration over escalating food and fuel prices began on April 11. Yesterday, seven people were seriously injured in Masaka, two of them policemen. A total of 30 people were arrested. Police last night tried to explain away Nalwanga's death, saying "stray bullets" hit her as security forces shot in the air to scare protestors who had barricaded all access routes to Masaka town. Asked how high the police fired the bullets since the baby killed was hardly a meter-tall, Mr. Noah Sserunjogi, the Southern Region police spokesman, instead said: "We are still investigating." The Police Professional Standards Unit (PSU), he said, had taken over the matter and the unit's regional head, Mr. Peter Wasswa, would lead the investigations.

According to Mr Sserunjogi, opposition supporters, mainly from the crowded Nyendo/Ssenyange Division, used boulders, metallic pieces and torched logs as well as car tires to obstruct traffic flow on the Kampala-Masaka-Mbarara highway and the town's inter-connecting roads. Masaka Diocesan Bishop, Rt. Rev. John-Baptist Kaggwa, last evening demanded that state actors that order and shoot at demonstrators must be held to account.

The prelate, in his Easter message, said: "The ongoing violence between security forces and civilians must be condemned together with all those that give the orders and the others who obey the orders --- to hide the truth." Whoever instigated yesterday's violence has likely sparked off a situation that might spiral out of control because people could become "ungovernable" if there is no restraint in brutality unleashed on them, he said.

Crimes like this will not go unpunished, I can assure you all fellow Ugandans. The parents of this victim will see justice and adequate compensation at the right time.

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People should be handled with respect, dignity, and with love. They should be told the truth and in a convincing manner. But violence, tear-gas, rubber-bullets, beatings and kickings will not solve the issues." Activists for Change (A4C), a non-partisan platform, called on Ugandans to walk to their work places every Monday and Thursday to show displeasure with government officials and extract intervention necessary to tame the double-digit inflation.

Uganda's key development partners and human rights activists across the world have condemned the way in which particularly three-time presidential contender, Kizza Besigye, has been manhandled by soldiers and police during forcible arrests. "Open dialogue is far more useful than imprisoning people," Bishop Kaggwa said. The situation is not going to change until the Dictator is gone and for sure he is going soon

Minister's word

Mr Matia Kasaija, the state minister for Internal Affairs, yesterday described the killing of the infant as "terrible" but blamed lawless demonstrators.

He said: "Police never moved in until they were invited by the rioters – so who is to be blamed first? Is it the one who comes to put down the riot or the one who caused the riot in the first place?"

The government has maintained failed crop yields due to drought and surge in global oil prices stirred the inflation, and there is nothing it can do to mitigate peoples' suffering.

Masaka was calm earlier in the day, but suddenly erupted into chaos after news of the re-arrest of Dr Besigye trickled in. Nyendo Division is an opposition stranglehold.

Unlike previously when he was granted bail, court yesterday remanded Dr Besigye to a civil prison in the sparsely populated Nakasongola District where his Democratic Party counterpart, Norbert Mao, was relocated to early Thursday from Luzira. Masaka town was last night under a security lockdown.

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