

Ugandans to the rescue



Monday, June 21, 2010

Kiboko squad and Panda Gari, what's the difference?

Ugandans especially Baganda are found praising new rulers on the scene, chanting slogans of credit to the new “not yet known dictators” like M7. Slogans like “twebaka kutuulo” or “Twawona Pandagari” With the situation today in Uganda the kiboko squad compared to Panda gari, given a choice which one would you prefer? I would prefer neither because acts are categorized as violations of human rights.

But Kiboko squad as you may see in the picture is more humiliating and degrading! Immagine you are a 35 year old father walking you 5 year old to school, all of a sudden a 21 year kiboko squad member pull over on you and started whooping you for no reason in front you son, you can't stop him fro abusing you rights and you can't defend yourself but you can only try to run for your life yet your 5 year old can not keep up with you! What do you do/ This has happened to so many Ugandans as is now a way of living



GOONS: The public could only look on as these cane-wielding fellows meted out beatings on Opposition officials on Heroes Day.

By Emmanuel Gyezaho ([email the author](#))

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On April 16, 2007, MPs Hussein Kyanjo (JEEMA, Makindye West) and Beatrice Anywar (FDC, Kitgum) were arrested and locked up at the Central Police Station in Kampala. They spent the night in jail and were subsequently arraigned at the Buganda Road Court a day later on charges of participating in a riot.

Help is on the way

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Squad's birth

The government believed that the two MPs were the brains behind the chaotic and bloody riots that had engulfed the country a week earlier, following that dreaded proposal to dole out part of the Mabira rainforest to a sugarcane planter. Unfortunately, one Asian and two Ugandans had been killed during the riots. Irked by the MPs' arrest, hundreds of opposition supporters took to the streets in protest.

FDC leader Kizza Besigye and other opposition politicians who had been meeting behind closed doors at the Christ the King Church hall then attempted to march to CPS later that afternoon. They were greeted with pepper spray, teargas and high pressure water. The police action triggered off a chain reaction in the city centre as bystanders scampered for safety. And then lo and behold.

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Plain clothed operatives armed with clubs, batons and canes descended upon Buganda Road, sections of Kampala Road, Lumumba Avenue and the Constitutional Square and unleashed terror beating up people indiscriminately. Officially, that was the day the Kiboko squad was born.

Three anniversaries later, however, the notorious gang resurfaced on the streets of Kampala. Same script, same actors. Opposition leader Kizza Besigye and several of his colleagues will live to remember this year's Heroes Day celebrations.

While President Museveni was handing out a medal of honor in Luweero to Dr Besigye's wife Winnie Byanyima—albeit in absentia, for her heroics during the 1981-86 bush war struggle, her husband was receiving a bitter reward for exercising the supposed benefits of political pluralism.

It was a pathetic specter watching Dr Besigye get beaten in broad-day light by stick-wielding goons as the police stood on watch. And while we were still stomaching this embarrassing incident, Internal Affairs Minister Kirunda Kivejinja then moved to add insult to injury, presenting a government response on the incident to Parliament on Tuesday.

“While the Police was attempting to disperse the group that had come from the Railway Station, another unidentified group armed with sticks appeared from nowhere. They began to disperse everybody and in the process many people were assaulted; I understand Dr Besigye is one of those who were assaulted,” said the minister.

Defending the police's ineptitude in its failure to apprehend individuals who had taken the law into their hands, the grey-haired minister said the police had not Okayed Dr Besigye's planned rally and had subsequently commissioned an investigation “to establish the identity, membership, leadership and mission of this group.” The idea, he said, is to “find out who they are”, adding, “Criminal charges will

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definitely be brought against anyone who will be identified.” Well, well, well; I bet you have heard this before.

Reacting to the statement, Opposition Chief Whip Kassiano Wadri said he had information to suggest that the Kiboko squad “were energized with porridge” from CPS before the attack on Besigye. Mr Kivejinja may feign ignorance about this group but there is a limit to which a falsehood can be defended.

There is television footage showing stick wielding men in April 2007 springing from CPS to openly assault civilians.

In fact, a Daily Monitor investigation at the time revealed that the Kiboko squad was briefed, armed and directed to execute in the know of government. The sticks which the group used to clobber civilians were ferried to the backyard of CPS on a police pick-up truck, the report revealed.

Also, a certain character called Juma Semakula, went on to claim responsibility as leader of the squad, telling journalists that his men were part of the police’s Usalama project, created to help police in crowd control. And let it not be forgotten that Police Chief Gen. Kale Kayihura on March 14, 2007 launched the Usalama project in Kawempe where some 300 people were conscripted.

Each division in Kampala was supposed to recruit about 300 people. So what the heck is Mr Kivejinja talking about? Judging from Besigye’s Heroes Day misadventures, it would be correct to say that there is no difference between the police and the kiboko squad. They stood on guard together as Besigye got beaten. The incident is similar to a situation where one finds a young, helpless woman being raped and stands by watching. Would there be any difference between the rapist and you the bystander?

That is exactly what the police did. It was a preposterous sight that is telling of just how pathetic our politics has degenerated. Look, even if anyone may not want to vote Besigye, the man still deserves respect as a citizen of this country who has vied for the biggest job in the land. He is president of Uganda’s biggest opposition political party.

It is easy to forget that the suppression of dissenting voices is always at the root of political instability world over. With talk of retaliation from the opposition, we are now seeing a Kenya in the making right here, only a few months to the next election. And that is a sad commentary.

FLOWERS

It pays to be informed and Bukedea County MP Charles Oduman is one informed man. Over the years I have seen MPs debate on the floor for the sake of grandstanding, making nothing but polemic statements.

Only in his first term as an MP, Oduman continues to do himself proud. He is one of very few politicians to receive applause in this column for the second time. The government tabled a request before Parliament last week to authorize the release of Shs5.6billion for next month’s AU summit.

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