



Press Release

THE JUDICIARY

Plot 2, The Square High Court Building
P. O. Box 7085, Kampala Uganda

IN ANY CORRESPONDENCE ON
THIS SUBJECT PLEASE QUOTE NO.

25 March 2019

For Immediate Release

We have not closed any court – Judiciary

KAMPALA: The Principal Judge, Dr. Yorokamu Bamwine, has clarified that Judges are neither on strike nor has the Judiciary closed any of its courts over poor funding. *Daily Monitor's* issue of Monday March 25, published a story with headlines “Judges close 20 courts to protest low funding” and “High Court judges strike over poor funding”.

“There is no crisis in the Judiciary the way it has been painted by the story – High Court judges are certainly not on strike,” he said on Monday. “I think the newspaper made reference to recommendations made during a meeting of High Court judges on Friday (March 22) that High Court circuits should be closed until the Judiciary gets adequate resources to operate them.”

Added the Principal Judge: “So it’s not true that 20 courts have been closed. It was a recommendation, which may be accepted or rejected by the Judiciary administration and the government...It will be considered by Judiciary’s Planning and Development Committee and if the Committee supports it, then the next move will be to advise the Chief Justice on the possible closure of those courts.”

The Judiciary operates eight specialised divisions of the High Court that are based in Kampala, and it has 20 gazetted High Court Circuits (branches of the High Court outside Kampala). The decentralization of the High Court that led to the creation of the Circuits started in 1998.

Only 14 of the Circuits (Arua, Fort Portal, Gulu, Jinja, Kabale, Lira, Masaka, Masindi, Mbarara, Mbale, Mpigi, Mubende, Mukono and Soroti) are operational. The six Circuits of Hoima, Iganga, Luwero, Moroto, Rukungiri and Tororo have not been operationalised due to lack of funds, infrastructure and human resources.

Besides, only Mbale, Gulu, Masaka, Kabale and Masindi High Court Circuits have structures customised for a High Court – the other circuits are either resident in structures of magistrate courts in the areas or operate in rented buildings.

“We created circuits with the hope that we would have a minimum of two judges per circuit. That was the standard, but as we talk only three out of 20 (Jinja, Mbale and Mbarara) have two judges,” said Dr. Bamwine.

“Justice for All”

T: +256 414 233 420/3 E: info@judiciary.go.ug W: www.judiciary.go.ug

He said the implementation of the March 28, 2018 Parliamentary Resolution, that increased the structure of the High Court judges from the current 51 to 82, is long overdue.

Reasons advanced for recommendation to close High Court Circuits

1. **Poor facilitation:** Circuits have unique problems of case backlog, but they do not have adequate resources to tackle the problem. The Judges said they cannot pretend to be working when the resources to run the circuits are so inadequate. For instance, a Judge working out of a station is entitled to Shs170,000 per diem for a night, but the sum is inadequate for his/her meal and accommodation in a decent hotel.
2. **Human resource challenges:** Most of them lack basics like secretaries, court clerks and interpreters.
3. **Infrastructure challenges:** Only five of the 20 circuits have High Court buildings. The rest operate from un-customized rented structures or share accommodation with magistrates' courts.
4. **Loneliness:** Resident judges feel inhibited in terms of association. Being at upcountry stations alone (without professional colleagues) makes them feel lonely, yet the nature of their job makes it hard for them to freely fraternize with just anybody.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Vincent Emmy Mugabo (Public Relations Officer): **+256 77 249 9683**, vemugabo@judicature.go.ug

Solomon Muyita (Senior Communications Officer): **+256 77 220 0089**, smuyita@judicature.go.ug