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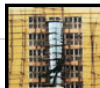
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Commentary

Remove lethal weapons from police, security guards and riot police.

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In Summary

The cardinal duty of private security guards is to monitor for any breaches of safety and security of life and property under their watch. They may use the equipment listed above to temporarily contain the situation while at the same time using the phones and walkie-talkie two-way radios to alert the police.

Any prudent-minded Ugandan must be exceedingly outraged at how our state security agencies and private security companies do not value human life. Consider the senseless murder of two Makerere University students recently by a trigger-happy private security guard. And this was a day before security personnel killed three civilians at Kasubi tombs.

While the police did the right thing to disarm all private guards at Makerere University, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, that regulates activities of private security companies, should as a matter of emergency, direct the disarmament of all private security personnel countrywide.

Technically, private security companies are not law enforcement agencies, but their cardinal role is to help and expedite the performance of state law enforcement agencies - the police, army and prison. As such they should not, under any circumstance, be licensed to carry lethal weapons.

As economy grows, there is proportionate increase by business owners to protect their investments. This protection can be done by either hiring police, or private security guards. But because it's economically cheaper for businesses to hire private security guards than police, most

of them opt for the former.

However, the only equipment private security guards must be allowed to carry to perform their duties are telephones, walkie-talkie two-way radios whose frequencies should be interceptable by the police, batons, whistles, handcuffs, flash lights and, in specialised cases, tear gas. But special consideration should be given to tear gas because its use requires a specialised and professional training. These security equipments are generally considered less lethal, but serve the purpose for private security personnel to effectively perform their duties.

The cardinal duty of private security guards is to monitor for any breaches of safety and security of life and property under their watch. They may use the equipment listed above to temporarily contain the situation while at the same time using the phones and walkie-talkie two-way radios to alert the police. Even when the police or the army responds to the scene of crime or civil strife, it's unacceptable for them to use live bullets when there is no corresponding deadly threat to warrant them. Government and private security agencies must know that lethal weapons like live bullets must never be used for crowd control. Tear gas and rubber bullets are the most effective tools for crowd control.

The attempted damage of a car at Makerere University by students and the demonstrations by irate Baganda subjects at Kasubi tombs did not constitute deadly force at all because no lives were immediately in danger. Unfortunately, these prompted trigger-happy security guard and soldiers respectively to open fire - needlessly killing three civilians.

We have seen many similar incidents in the past; the most recent being the September 2009 riots in and around Kampala that claimed 27 lives. There was also the police shooting of local artiste Bebe Cool at Centenary Park after a scuffle.

If the Minister of Internal Affairs cannot order for the removal of lethal weapons from private security personnel, he should honourably resign. How many lives must we lose before we take full responsibility for our actions? Parliament should pass a law that makes the use of lethal weapons by private security personnel illegal.

Similarly, state security agencies should be banned from using lethal weapons against citizens whose actions - like peaceful demonstrations - do not endanger any life. For instance, if the British Police can effectively maintain security in UK without carrying guns with live bullets, what is this obsession Ugandans have with guns and live bullets? Or have we turned into a police state?

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