

View Point: Militarising school kids disturbing

Letters

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Written by Our Readers

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When I passed to join Makerere University in the mid-1990s, the condition for “qualifying for government scholarship”, besides having the grades, was undergoing military-style training at Kyankwanzi.

I refused to be intimidated and waited to tussle it out with whoever would withdraw my right, not privilege, to quality education. Thank God no one stood in my way.

However, it now disturbs me to see even children in lower primary school carrying wooden clubs on their shoulders (supposed to represent guns), performing ‘parades’! Have schools run out of alternative activities to engage our children during such ‘parades’? Is this also the norm in schools outside Uganda? Has Uganda turned into a military state?

Joseph Kony has already ruined many children’s psyche by conscripting them into the Lord’s Resistance Army. How easy then will someone else find it, in future, to recruit these children who have already been militarised in the name of ‘parades’?

Greg Olupot,
Kampala.

We can put a stop to human trafficking

Though human trafficking is a crime, every year thousands of women and children fall into the hands of traffickers who force them into prostitution. Apparently, young African women and children are often lured by promises of steady employment abroad, eventually being forced into prostitution on getting to their destinations.

Many of these victims, in most cases, may not be aware that they will be forced into the commercial sex trade or that their passports will be confiscated. These victims end up experiencing violence, especially once they try to escape or fail to realise the incomes their captives expected from them.

I believe that human trafficking may come to a standstill if society creates awareness about the causes and effects of the international commercial sex trade, report suspected human traffickers and help support organizations that are fighting human trafficking. I appeal to government to augment its law enforcement capacity and take the responsibility of warning the public about this crime.

Marion Patricia Atim,
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Ugandans should be sensitised on Constitution

Due to the many demonstrations and strikes that have been occurring in the country, I feel there is need for the government to educate Ugandans on the Constitution. Uganda’s 1995 Constitution, under the democratic principles states: ‘The state should be based on democratic principles which empower and encourage the active participation of all citizens at all levels in their own governance.’

Therefore, I suggest the government should educate the general public about the democratic principles enshrined in the Constitution through public debates, social awareness campaigns and in schools with the intention of making Ugandans more aware of what it entails.

When Ugandans become conscious of the Constitution, they will become more aware of their rights and, at the same time, their limitations. For example, they will learn that resisting arrest, throwing stones at the police and inciting violence are actually crimes.

I believe that sensitizing the citizens on the Constitution will improve law and order, reduce civil disobedience and the general public will become more manageable for the police and in the longrun will have a positive impact on tourism. Businessowners will also benefit because they will not lose business or have their premises looted during uncalled-for riots.

Joan Nakijoba,
Kampala.

Help save Afghan rape survivor

Eighteen-year-old Lal Bibi was kidnapped, raped, tortured and chained to a wall for five days by a gang of powerful Afghan police officers. But she stood up to do what women in Afghanistan are told not to ? she is fighting back, and together we can help her and all Afghan women win justice.

According to deep cultural dictates, as a raped woman, Lal Bibi has been “dishonoured” and will kill herself ? and she publicly says she must, unless her rapists are brought to book to restore her honour and dignity. Afghanistan’s justice system routinely fails to pursue these cases and so far the chief suspects in Lal Bibi’s case have not been prosecuted, and it is likely that international attention will die down. Every day that passes without an arrest pushes Lal Bibi closer to suicide ? but there is hope.

Last weekend, the US, UK, Japan and other major donors pledged billions of dollars to Afghanistan ? money that will pay for the very police forces responsible for Lal Bibi’s rape. But an international outcry can shame donor countries into action, conditioning their aid on real action to fight rape and protect women.

Donor countries can and should require that funds are not spent to grow a police force that acts with appalling impunity and that police officers

work to protect women, not attack them!

We helped stop the illegal stoning of Sakineh Ashtiani in Iran, and fought for justice for rape survivors in Libya, Morocco and Honduras. Please use the URL below to sign a petition that could save Lal Bibi's life:
http://www.avaaz.org/en/justice_for_lal_bibi_c/?bWIMJab&v=15774

Dalia Hashad,
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Sue govt for breach of Maputo protocol

The Attorney General should be taken to court for failure to adequately fund the agricultural sector, and thereby breaching the Maputo Protocol. In recent years, the sector has been receiving a token three to five per cent of the annual budget. This has had no impact. Last year the sector received four per cent. This year it has been reduced further to three per cent. Next year it could fall to two per cent or less!

In 2003, during a meeting convened in Maputo, Mozambique, an agreement, referred to as the 'Maputo Protocol', was signed, where African governments pledged to give their respective agricultural sectors at least 10 per cent of the annual budgets. This was intended to boost the sector because it is the backbone of many an African economy.

But our government remains obstinate; I believe Ugandan farmers have a duty to use the courts to get the government to keep these commitments. In 2001 in Abuja, Nigeria, an agreement was signed to allocate African health sectors 15 per cent of national budgets. This too is not being followed by the NRM government.

Okello Dan,
Former UPC Chairman,
Lira district.

Matron Asiimwe set great example

As I read the story on the school matron who risked her life trying to save children from a dormitory fire that occurred at Leo's Junior Academy, Masaka, I was almost moved to tears. A lot of negative things have been said about matrons or children's caretakers in Ugandan schools, especially concerning their harsh treatment of children.

It is, however, inspirational when, in our day-to-day lives, we come across people who are willing to give up the most precious thing – their lives ? to save others. Certainly it is not everyday that one encounters this sort of sublime behaviour as the natural human instinct is usually to save one's life.

I would, therefore, like to add my voice to that of many others who have commended the extraordinary behaviour Grace Asiimwe exhibited when the children under her charge were besieged by fire. I wish all school matrons could borrow a leaf from her.

With boarding schools almost a necessity, a critical mass of people like Grace Asiimwe would ensure parents everywhere always lived with the peace of mind, knowing that their children in boarding schools are in safe hands, even under the worst circumstances. Once again, I would like to say 'Bravo' Grace Asiimwe; I invoke God's blessings upon you.

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