

## Ssemujju Nganda: Museveni mustn't rock IUIU boat

Columnists

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All is not well at the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU).

The minister of state for Regional Cooperation, Asuman Kiyingi, has replaced government representatives on the IUIU Council with two controversial figures – Mukwanason Hyuha and Mahir Balunywa. The two have since been rejected by the IUIU administration, National Council for Higher Education and a bigger section of the Muslim community.

The reason for the rejection is obvious to whoever has been following developments in the country, and IUIU in particular. I joined Makerere University as a student in 1995 when Hyuha was Academic Registrar and I believe there is nobody who didn't celebrate his sacking a decade later. Here was an administrator who treated the public university as his private enterprise.

For anyone to even think that Hyuha can serve on an organ of a university, let alone a faith-based one like IUIU, is madness, to say the least. Since he is an old man, Hyuha should be allowed to retire and disappear from the education scene peacefully. His moral turpitude was dealt a huge blow and any attempt to repair it will prove costly. As for Balunywa, I have not interacted with him personally to know his shortcomings as they are being articulated publicly now.

What I know is that he authored a stinker about the very university in which he was a lecturer. His dossier on the university, widely circulated on the internet, was very provocative and it brought him in direct confrontation with the administration. Because of my background and training, I cherish criticisms but Balunywa's went beyond reason. It is, therefore, ill-advised to appoint such a person on the same university's council, his other qualities notwithstanding.

Balunywa will use every opportunity availed to him by the appointment to try and settle old scores as he was almost sacked by the IUIU. Since these appointments are made in the name of Museveni or in the name of his government, it is him that we must hold responsible. Asuman Kiyingi is himself not very much different from both Hyuha and Balunywa in character.

Probably that is why Jim Muhwezi, as Health minister, sacked him as Corporation Secretary of National Medical Stores around 2004. He is now on a collision course with Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga. You remember accusations levelled against him to the effect that he ferried money and women to Entebbe to influence a report on the probe brought against Amama Mbabazi on the NSSF/Temangalo fraud.

I am told that agents of Museveni - like Kiyingi – have now manufactured stories intended to mobilise the anger of Museveni towards the IUIU administrators, especially the Rector, Dr Ahmed Ssengendo. The first story was that Ssengendo had turned the university into a JEEMA recruitment centre, which by the way is not illegal. Since JEEMA doesn't represent an immediate threat to the regime, this didn't move Museveni.

What made Museveni act were claims that IUIU was helping ADF recruit. Arbitrary as he is, Museveni wrote to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) asking them to sack Ssengendo. The OIC wrote back telling Museveni that the power to remove a rector is vested in the council. That is why government representatives to the council had to be changed immediately.

Kirunda Kivejinja, Lubega Kaddunabbi and MP Huda had to give way to Mahir and Hyuha who were willing to execute this assignment diligently. And I am not saying Ssengendo is untouchable. He can actually be removed, but surely not on flimsy grounds. I taught at IUIU and I know the contribution Ssengendo and his team have made. This university never used to pay its lecturers before Ssengendo took over. Under him, we were promptly paid.

Under him, the university has opened a third campus in Arua and a fourth, females only, at Kabojja, Kampala. The university contributes to our human resource stock with about 2,000 graduates per year. Museveni has significantly contributed to the killing of Makerere University and has now started on IUIU.

It may be a big contribution to allow access to free primary education, but also a big disaster to kill off higher education. Uganda has one of the lowest higher education intakes in the world which stand at less than 20%. For a country to develop, at least 50% of its population must either have gone through, or be in, institutions of higher education.

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