

STATE OF POLITICS IN UGANDA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY

Dear brothers and sisters, comrades in the struggle. The struggle against capitalism. Fraternal greetings from my comrades in Kabale Socialist Club Uganda.

My names are: Weijagye Justus, Secretary Kabale Socialist Club.

Kabale Socialist Club was started in 1996. We are a reasonable and increasing number of socialists. We have both Short term and long term agenda. Our short term agenda include tackling issues that affect us locally and nationally such as; solutions towards absolute poverty, wars, corruption and nepotism, political intolerance, freedom of speech, of thought, expression and press freedom. Post election inflation and high bank interest rates and charges, Healthcare, Education, Transport, Street kids, poor sanitation, sewage and drainage systems, insecurity and Environmental problems such as pollution. While our sole long term agenda is to educate the masses to be class conscious and about the socialist alternative. We are working towards formation of Socialist Party Uganda.

Here I present: "STATE OF POLITICS IN UGANDA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY".

The present regime in Uganda is under President Yoweri Museveni who came to power through an armed five year struggle and overthrowing a military Government of the then President Tito Okello Olotwa in January 1986 and which Tito Okello's Junta had overthrown the Regime of Dr Apollo Milton Obote.

Mr. Yoweri Museveni waged a protracted armed war against Obote's elected Government on the grounds of Obote having been elected fraudulently through a rigged election. Purportedly that the winner having been Mr. Kawanga Semogerere of the Democratic Party (DP).

However it is now coming to 1/4 of century Uganda being under the rule of Mr, Yoweri Museveni and the regime itself has failed to organize free and fair elections.

The last general elections in Uganda indicated that there is no democracy in the country. The oppression and suppression to candidates of opposition parties and their supporters increases as one stands at higher levels of elective offices and worsens when it comes to presidential position.

A report on Uganda's last elections may look like a fairly tale.

The period of elections in Uganda is a period of violence, harassment, intimidation and torture on one side and merrymaking (in a form of "gifts"-alcohol, salt, pieces of soap, sugar and cash in exchange for votes) on the other hand. The campaigns attract many people, especially the rallies of those candidates who are well to do and easy on their pockets. In Uganda money is very powerful and we are judged by our material possessions. It does not matter whether you have ideas and initiatives and would contribute positively if elected be it at lowest elect able position. So the terrible poverty makes most people vote with their mouth and not with their conscience.

Corruption is rife. So it appears a miracle for a poor but reasonable person to sail through and make it to political office. On the other hand, there is controversy when the president turns out and starts campaigning in favour of some candidate and campaigning against some others on grounds that the favoured ones are "pro-his party". In some parts of the

country the electoral process is militarised. This is mostly in places where opposition parties and candidates are contesting along with the historicals of president's National Resistance Movement Organisation (NRMO) and/or his personal friends. These military personnel go as down tearing opposition candidates' posters. The Government fabricates trumped capital offense charges such as treason, murder, rape and defilement against the strong opposition leaders and members.

This results in violence where some people lose lives. Most contestants, especially those in the ruling party and those independent candidates favoured by the state, bribe voters to the extend of buying the poor needy voters, blankets, mattresses, bicycles and hoes, in the expectation that out of which excitement the poor voters would eventually not resist voting for such candidates even if it is clear that the candidate is a non-performer. Some of the pro NRM candidates at Parliamentary and Local council 5(District Chairpersons) levels go as far as spending over U Shs 900 millions(US Dollars 410,000)

Most manifestos centre on poverty. Opportunity is to capitalise on this biting poverty in most Uganda's homes. There is this "Prosperity for all so –programme-by the incumbent president". Promises of clean water, electricity, facilitation in schools, road network and rehabilitation of hospitals and health units. Some of these are naked lies while some have proved to be dressed up lies.

For example the prosperity for all programme is a naked lie as it is just a scheme to dupe the poor as poverty cannot be eliminated when there is rampant corruption in Government and funds to help in delivering social services such as health and education are swindled by individuals and because they are always members of the ruling party, they are not tampered with or if it is attempted cases die in courts of law. There are dressed up lies especially when the ruling party MPs and the President promise some constituents electricity and water supplies and materials and equipments for this work such as electric poles are delivered and heaped along sides the roads on pretext that work is starting only to be carried away immediately after the elections.

There is talk about health programmes, education, security and peace yet in some places these rallies can not take place because of insecurity—due to rebel activities.

Then we come to voting day. Most of the candidates and their supporters see this as a day determining between life and death. They become aggressive so as to win the election. Winning indeed is the only way by which they can recover the money used in bribing voters. Once elected they get access to public funds and embezzle it. They can, as well, raise their salaries and allowances. On polling day voters who support poor candidates and those candidates who are not favoured by the president are harassed, intimidated and sometimes beaten. Those who resist intimidation are given already ticked ballots papers by the polling officials that when the voter then ticks a candidate of his or her choice the ballot paper ends being invalid Some are even refused voting or are forced to vote in sight of the polling officials, but the supporters of the favoured and rich candidates are allowed to vote more than once, to vote in other people's names—the dead and the absent. There is ballot stuffing such that in most polling stations where there is majority support to the ruling party, votes cast would be greater than the number of registered voters at the same

polling station. In some such places even some opposition voters' names are deleted from the voters' register.

It is only where the opposition is in very majority say over 75% that usually opposition candidates especially at District and Parliamentary levels go through. In such incidences like in most of Northern and Eastern Uganda, the state finds itself with less support that it has no chance of getting people to manipulate and facilitate the state armed and fanatics in rigging elections in favour of the ruling Government.

During the 1996 Presidential elections a year after Uganda enacted anew constitution, President Yoweri Museveni scored 76% of the votes, and in 2001 he scored 67% while in 2006 he scored 57% despite of all the electoral malpractices and rigging in his favour. This is on record as indicated by High court cases filed by Dr.Kiiza Besigye, the Presidential runners up in the last two Presidential elections.

The 1995 constitution had been enacted with law to presidential terms as limited to two terms of each five years, but because of the decline in support of the person of Mr.Yoweri Museveni and as well as end to his presidency, the terms were changed from two term limits to no term limit. This was done after president Yoweri Museveni bribed the MPs by giving each cash of U Shs 5,000,000.equivalent to US Dollars 2300.

As the constitution entails that in order for one to be declared presidential winner, he or she has to score over 50% of the votes. Now that the surveys indicate that the president's support has declined down below this 50% attempts are being made to persuade and bribe MPs and or District Local Councils to change the constitution such that who ever scores whatever highest score becomes the Presidential winner which would give the incumbent a chance of winning the next coming presidential elections scheduled early next year (2011).

During the last elections, the state continued coercing and manipulating Local council chairpersons, and indeed whose existence under the present multiparty arrangement is questionable, to work as its agents in support of the incumbent president and extremist politicians of the ruling party. The state seduce them to be the agents of the incumbent by buying them foods, household materials and some allowances as well as giving them letters to work as his (Yoweri Museveni's) agents without consulting them. They are facilitated by Resident District Commissioners, who as civil servants are supposed to be impartial.

The law on elections especially on the person of presidential candidate works in favour of the incumbent as he/she remains in office of president as president at the same time as presidential candidate. So it looks like two football teams playing where by the referee is one of the 1st 11 of one of the playing teams.

Our assessment of the previous elections and the nature of inclination is that because of the above mentioned methods of work of the ruling, the opposition which now outweighs government in support will continue to be demoralised.

As a result there is likely that also in the previous elections and in the coming elections some opposition voters may have been demoralized and may continue to be so in the upcoming elections ending up not voting that will give the ruling party unfortunate upper hand. We call it unfortunate upper hand because it has minority support.

In the unlikely event of no possibility of change of Government democratically, there is always rise of rebel activities, insurgencies and violence before, during and after each national elections.

The state also use religious, tribal and ethnic groups to cause antagonisms and neutralize their political powers as well as giving out gifts in form of executive cars and houses to the leaders of these groups which money like most of other monies used by the ruling party is withdrawn form Government treasury. Actually there is no demarcation between the ruling party, NRM, and the Government. The Government funds raised and collected from tax payers by the National Tax body, the Uganda Revenue Authority end in doing activities of the politicians of the ruling party on their individual capacities as well as an organisation. So the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties, groups and individuals is that of rife and hatred instead of being a case of just presentation of diverging views and different manifestos to give voters a choice. As a result the opposition parties form coalition of convenience in hope to overthrow the incumbents democratically.

Therefore ,we in Kabale Socialist Club, maintain and request that for Uganda's democratic process to grow and for smooth unhindered unity and development of our country, the two 5 years each term limits of persons of president must be restored. Also put in place must be age limit of persons aspiring for the offices of Local Council 5, Members of Parliament as well as the president to at least 75 yeas of age. Also the person of president who wishes to contest the same position must first resign the post and leave office as well as state house in order to give way for free and fair elections. The electoral commission should compose of members from different political parties. Law must be put in place so that when one is found to have participated in rigging election in his/her favour by contravening electoral laws then that person must be disqualified from standing for an elect able office as well as holding an appoint able civil public office.

This is where Kabale Socialist Club comes in to give a vote of thanks and appreciation to the South African Communist Party and the African National Congress as well as Congress of South African Trade Union for the Unity shown which works to Advantage not only to the people of the Republic of South Africa but as well as the African continent. In that same vein we thank the South African Government for giving welcoming hands to those people in countries on this continent including ours who have been given habitat here when tortured and mistreated in their home countries. We long to see such happen in our country Uganda and other neighbouring countries where there is political instability. We look forward to when our Government will start appreciating the emerging revolutionary left movement in the country.

On behalf of Kabale Socialist Club I wish to extend our gratitude to the South African Communist Party membership for the kind of fraternity shown in extending invitations as well as facilitating us to be able to attend the conferences.

Comrades never give up. The struggle continues.

Thank you for availing me opportunity to talk to you and the attention.

Weijagye Justus

Kabale Socialist Club.