

RESIDENTS DEMAND SWIFT JUSTICE AS POLICE INVESTIGATE

By Simon Ssekidde

Residents of Kammengo sub-county in Mpigi district have called for speedy investigations and prosecution of Ivan Muwanga, a witchdoctor suspected of having carried out several ritual murders.

This follows shocking discoveries of human remains, including six human skulls and fresh body parts, inside the home and shrines of the 39-year-old witchdoctor in Lunyerere village, Kammengo sub-county, on December 8.

Muwanga was arrested by security personnel after angry residents descended on his home, seeking to lynch him following a report by a 12-year-old girl to her mother of an attempted abduction allegedly by Muwanga.

The girl reportedly revealed that Muwanga chased her while she was returning from the garden, but she managed to escape.

It is alleged that the girl ran for her life with Muwanga in hot pursuit and was only saved by two women she met along the way.

According to residents, on seeing the women, Muwanga took cover in a maize garden near his home.

The girl's mother, Spesioza Ssendagire, immediately reported the matter to Kammengo Police Station and alerted neighbours, who stormed Muwanga's home baying for his blood.

However, police from Kammengo and Mpigi, together with the army, arrived in time to secure Muwanga's home and shrines, which residents wanted to raze. Police had to fire shots in the air to disperse the irate crowd.

Earlier, on December 5, police had discovered the headless body of a 12-year-old girl, Betty Nabuyungo, who had been murdered, with the killers taking away many of her body parts, including her head, private parts, legs and hands. The killers abandoned the girl's body in Kalungi Swamp along the Kampala-Masaka highway.

The deceased was also a resident of Lunyerere village. She went missing after being sent by her mother to collect her Term III report card from school.

When the girl did not return home, her worried parents reported the matter to Kammengo Police Station. A search was launched until her lifeless body was found dumped in the nearby Kalungi Swamp.

Police detectives conducted

MPIGI RESIDENTS CALL FOR SPEEDY TRIAL OF RITUAL MURDER SUSPECT

PHOTO BY SIMON SSEKIDDE



Residents join police as they search the shrines of Ivan Muwanga, a witchdoctor suspected to have carried out several ritual murders. This was in Lunyerere village, Kammengo sub-county in Mpigi district

a search at Muwanga's premises and discovered human remains, including a head and other body parts buried in his shrines. Some of the body parts had been wrapped in bark cloth.

DNA ANALYSIS

All exhibits were taken to the Government Analytical Laboratory in Wandegeya for forensic and deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) analysis to establish whether they match those of residents who have reported missing persons.

The body parts will also be analysed to determine whether they match the recovered body of the murdered 12-year-old girl, according to Lydia Tumushabe, the Katonga regional police spokesperson.

"We conveyed the human remains discovered from the suspect's home and shrines to the Government Analytical Laboratory for forensic examination to establish whether they match those of people claiming to have lost their relatives," Tumushabe said.

However, after police and the army withdrew from Muwanga's home, angry residents on Thursday evening descended on the suspect's shrines and house and demolished them, accusing

Suspected human bones and other remains that were recovered at the shrine of Ivan Muwanga, businessman, who doubled as a witchdoctor, in Lunyerere village, Mpigi district



WHAT POLICE SAY

According to the Katonga regional police spokesperson, Lydia Tumushabe, investigations into the matter are still ongoing. She asked the public to remain calm as the Police carries out its work. She advised the public with information to share it with the Police to aid investigations. "We call on all those with missing persons to report to the Police and record statements," she said.

She said the human remains recovered from Muwanga's shrines and home are still at the Government Analytical Laboratory in Wandegeya for forensic analysis.

"Once they are released, they will further aid police investigations and help determine the appropriate charges to be preferred against Muwanga," Tumushabe said.

him of masterminding ritual killings.

They also cut down his banana plantation.

VICTIMS' PARENTS SPEAK OUT

Proscovia Ssendegeya, the mother of the 12-year-old girl who reportedly survived the attempted abduction by Muwanga, said she has been living in fear since the incident.

She said she has been receiving calls from unknown people asking her to take her daughter to them for help. "I am living in fear. There

are people I do not know who call me claiming to be working with different non-governmental organisations.

They say they want to take my daughter away to help her. Some call and ask whether I am the mother of the girl who survived before hanging up. I have since reported the matter to police," she said.

Benna Najjuko, the mother of Nabuyungo, the murdered girl, appealed for speedy investigations and prosecution of all those behind her daughter's killing.

"Ever since the incident happened, life has never been the same. I get frightening dreams every night. I need justice for my daughter. I also request the Police to help me recover my daughter's missing body parts so that I can bury her in one piece," she said.

Teddy Naluwoza, the grandmother of Nabuyungo, who lives in the neighbouring Kanyike village, also demanded justice. "I believe Muwanga was not working alone. He stayed with many people within the compound of his home that has a fence around it, who we believe managed to escape, and we do not know their whereabouts. We ask the security forces to arrest and prosecute all of them," she said.

George Nsubuga Kabaseke, the Kanyike village chairperson, pledged to work with police and leaders of traditional healers to rid the area of witchdoctors.

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

"Enough is enough. We are tired. We are going to conduct an operation aimed at weeding out all fake herbalists and witchdoctors from our area because we believe such people are behind the abductions and killings of children," he said.

He added that more than seven people have gone missing in the area within only two years, and residents now suspect that witchdoctors have a hand in their disappearance. Kabaseke called on residents to report any suspicious activities by herbalists in the area to authorities to prevent similar cases from happening again.

Richard Ssentongo, a resident of Lunyerere village, said he was relieved that police arrested Muwanga but called for speedy investigations.

"My 14-year-old son, Raymond Ssentongo, disappeared this year, and I now suspect that he might be among the bodies discovered from Muwanga's shrines," he said.