

By Barbra Kabahumuza

Two city lawyers have dragged the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) to court for shutting down the Internet during the just-concluded presidential and parliamentary elections.

Michael Aboneka and Raymond Amumpaire sued UCC alongside MTN Uganda Limited, Tangerine Limited T/A, Lyca Mobile and Airtel Uganda.

They want a declaration that the Internet shutdown by MTN and Airtel grossly affected their livelihood and thus affected their right to life guaranteed under Article 20 of the Constitution.

Court documents indicate that the said telecom companies, acting on the illegal directive of UCC, disconnected the applicants' internet connectivity and the entire country on January 13-18.

Aboneka states that he duly

# Lawyers sue UCC over internet shutdown



**Aboneka (left) and Amumpaire after filling a petition against UCC, MTN Uganda Limited, Tangerine Limited T/A, Lyca Mobile and Airtel Uganda for shutting down the Internet during the just-concluded presidential and parliamentary elections**

## **BETWEEN THE LINES**

**○ The duo wants an order for compensation of sh100m for the violation of their rights and the gross inconveniences and losses occasioned by the Internet shutdown.**

notified MTN and Airtel of his inability to use the Internet on January 14, and demanded for an explanation and connectivity of the Internet and the same notice was ignored.

"The respondents did not have any legal basis to arbitrarily shut down the Internet in Uganda," court documents read in part.

The duo avers that the

illegal internet shutdown violated various rights of the applicants and Ugandans at large, such as the right to life and livelihood, education, access to information and freedom of expression, political participation, participation in government affairs, practising one's profession and engaging in trade and business.

Aboneka states in his affidavit that on January 5, during a media conference, UCC, together with the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, assured the nation that the Internet would not be shut down during elections, which he believed and continued planning and conducting his business.

"Prior to the shutdown of

the Internet, I was attending my school as a Phd candidate at the University of Pretoria through the Internet, I was also scheduled for a meeting with my supervisor on January 15, which was not possible. This has greatly affected my learning and academic progress, infringing on my right to education guaranteed under Article 30 of the Constitution," he states in the affidavit.

The duo wants an order for compensation of sh100m for the violation of their rights and the gross inconveniences and losses occasioned by the internet shutdown.

They also want an order for a permanent injunction against the respondents from arbitrarily shutting down the Internet in Uganda.

The lawyers want an order for the full restoration of internet connectivity and all social media platforms in the country.