

This follows an alleged assault on the wife of Mr Robert Kyagulanyi during a raid on their home.

BY SYLVIA KATUSHABE

A group of women has condemned what they term as a systematic violation of women's dignity and privacy by security forces before and after the 2026 General Election.

In a press statement released yesterday by the Women's Probono Initiative (WPI), a feminist non-profit organisation, the women decried growing patterns of abuse targeting women, especially in politically charged situations.

"We are witnessing a 'dark chapter in our nation's history' where the forces mandated to protect the lives and property of Ugandans have turned into instruments of terror against women. We have observed a deplorable escalation in the targeted harassment, physical assault, and sexualised humiliation of women," the document reads.

The statement follows reports of an alleged assault on Ms Barbara (Barbie) Itungo, the wife of Opposition National Unity Platform (NUP) party president Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, during a raid on their home in Magere, Wakiso District, by security operatives, on January 23.

According to the Electoral Commission (EC), Mr Kyagulanyi finished second in the January 15 presidential election, securing 24.72 percent of the vote against the eventual winner and incumbent, Museveni, who clinched 71.65 percent of the valid ballots.

Mr Kyagulanyi dismissed the results as "rigged" and went underground. From time to time, he has resurfaced through videos uploaded from undisclosed locations, urging his supporters to pursue democratic means to claim what he calls their stolen victory.

Other women, including Ms Lina Zedriga and Ms Jolly Tukamushaba, both NUP deputy presidents for Northern and Western Uganda respectively, are

Women call out security agencies over violence

alleged to have been abducted, with their whereabouts still unknown.

The women warned that such conduct by security agencies amounts to grave human rights violations and threatens the rule of law.

"We refuse to remain silent as the sanctity of the Ugandan home is desecrated, and the dignity of our mothers, sisters, and daughters is stripped away under the guise of 'maintaining order.' What we are witnessing is not law enforcement; it is a systematic assault on the soul of our nation," the statement further states.

Highlighting the plight of women such as Ms Kyagulanyi, they caution that such actions carry far-reaching consequences, including psychological trauma for children, destabilisation of families, and damage to Uganda's international reputation.

"As men who have wives, mothers, and girl children, we call upon you to look at your own family and find the humanity to improve your attitude toward the protection of women's rights. We demand that you command your officers with the sanctity of women in mind. The behaviour of the forces is a reflection of leadership; it must change," the statement reads.

"The security forces, we are not asking you to stop doing your jobs. We are demanding that you do your jobs within the confines of the law. Your uniform does not give you a license to strip women naked during arrests, interrogation, or invade their privacy," the women state.

The women called on President Museveni to rein in security agencies and ensure accountability, while urging First Lady Janet Museveni to speak out against the alleged violations.



Ms Barbra Itungo, the wife of former presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, at St Francis Hospital, Nsambya, on January 24 following a security raid on her home. PHOTO/ABUBAKER LUBOWA

Police spokesperson Kituuma Rusoke, in a telephone interview last evening, neither dismissed nor confirmed the allegations, saying no formal complaint had been received.

"We have not come across that complaint. When we come across it, we shall analyse it and give you feedback," Mr Rusoke said.

Col Chris Magezi, the acting Defence



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Statement

Public Information Officer, could not be reached by press time. His deputy, Col Henry Obbo, referred our inquiries to his superior.

Ms Winnie Byanyima, the Executive Director of UNAIDS and wife of jailed Opposition veteran Dr Kizza Besigye, condemned the alleged assault on Ms Kyagulanyi, stressing that a violent and militarised election cannot reflect the will of the people.

"I condemn in the strongest terms the violent attack on the home of Barbara Itungo, the brutal assault on her, her staff, and the continued persecution of the family of Bobi Wine. A violent, militarised election can never reflect the will of the people. Kidnaps, abductions, killings, leaders forced into hiding, and nearly 10 days on the Internet still deliberately crippled," Ms Byanyima said via her X account.

Ms Patricia Munabi, the Executive Director of the Forum for Women in Democracy (Fowode), echoed the concerns, calling the actions indignifying.

"It is an attack on their privacy. The people who they are looking for or who they have alleged to have committed crimes are men, they are individuals, and it is not right to invade the privacy of their partners, looking for either information or anything about their husbands," Ms Munabi said.