

# FIVE ARRESTED OVER IMPERSONATING URA OFFICERS

By a Vision Reporter

"A thief has 40 days" is a popular proverb, often cited in Uganda. The proverbial 40 days have ended for five people who have been impersonating officials from the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA).

This was after an operation in Katovu near Lyantonde. The group has been arrested pending investigation and subsequent prosecution, according to URA.

The suspects were identified as Sam Odong Opio, Stephen Nuwaine, Amon Twesiime, Isma Ssebulime and Fredrick Asimwe, who was allegedly posing under the name Frank Agaba. He also had a URA identification card.

According to URA Assistant Commissioner, public and

corporate affairs, Robert Kalumba, the arrests were carried out by URA's Intelligence Unit, with support from whistleblowers and vigilant traders who raised suspicion about the group's activities.

According to URA officials, the suspects had been presenting themselves as enforcement officers and threatening traders with penalties and imprisonment over alleged violations, including selling beverages without digital tax stamps. The intimidation tactics were reportedly used to extort money from unsuspecting business owners.

However, investigations indicate that the group may be part of a larger network still operating in different areas.

Kalumba clarified that the suspects are not part of the

URA enforcement team, and investigations are ongoing to determine the full scope of the scheme.

"We want to assure the public that these individuals are not members of the URA enforcement team. Our intelligence unit, working together with the Uganda People's Defence Forces is verifying whether three of the suspects, Sam Odong Opio, Stephen Nuwaine and Amon Twesiime, are genuine soldiers," he noted.

Once the verification is complete, authorities will decide whether to try the suspects in the military court martial or civilian courts.

Investigators are also trying to find out how much money the suspects may have extorted



The suspects arrested for allegedly impersonating URA Officers

from traders.

Kalumba cautioned the public to remain alert, particularly as the financial year approaches the end, a period when fraudsters often attempt to take advantage of taxpayers.

"As the financial year draws to a close, we urge the public to be careful and verify the identity of anyone claiming to be a URA officer before making any payments," he said.

Kalumba further emphasised that the authority continues to strengthen its enforcement and intelligence efforts to combat

smuggling and related fraud schemes.

"We are constantly improving our strategies to combat smuggling and other illegal activities. The use of whistleblowers and other intelligence mechanisms is helping us detect and stop such schemes," he added.

The URA Commissioner General, John Musinguzi, warned the public against impersonating tax officials, saying the authority is intensifying efforts to eliminate the vice.

"Impersonation is a problem that we are fighting tooth and nail to root out with the support of the public. Anyone doing this should rest assured that we are coming for you," Musinguzi said, urging members of the public to remain vigilant and report suspicious individuals claiming to represent the tax body.

He emphasised that URA will continue working closely with the public and security agencies to protect taxpayers from fraudsters posing as officials.