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Did you know that broadcasting content on your *TikTok* account can be considered an offence?

Yesterday, lawyer Hassan Male Mabirizi was charged with the offence which attracts a jail term not exceeding 10 years on conviction.

The 39-year-old had hoped to regain his freedom, following the nullification of the provisions of the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act of 2023 by the Constitutional Court last month under which he was charged.

In a letter dated March 18, the Attorney General, Kiryowa Kiwanuka, had also advised the prosecution to terminate all proceedings emanating from the nullified law, which gave Mabirizi hope for freedom.

However, immediately after the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) dropped the charges of spreading malicious information and hate speech that were affected by the nullified law (provisions of the Computer Misuse Amendment Act), he was freshly slapped with two new charges, including broadcasting content on his *TikTok* account without a licence.

The offence is drawn from sections

28(1) and (2) of the Uganda Communications (UCC) Act.

THE CHARGES

Mabirizi is accused of broadcasting fake news on his *TikTok* account in which he allegedly stated that Chief Justice Dr Flavian Zeija and Justice of the Court of Appeal Musa Ssekaana are corrupt judicial officers.



According to the charge sheet, Mabirizi via his *TikTok* account allegedly

published an audio-visual news story wherein he stated that Chief Justice Zeija is a conman and corrupt file grabber who allegedly sold his property to pay a bribe for his appointment as a Principal Judge.

Justice Zeija joined the Judiciary in 2016 following his appointment as a judge of the High Court by the President on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission. Three years later, in December 2019, he was elevated to the position of Principal Judge.

In February last year, Zeija was appointed Deputy Chief Justice, a role he held until January 21, this year when he assumed office as Chief Justice, replacing Alfonse Owiny-Dollo who hung up his robes on January 18 this year upon attaining the mandatory retirement age of 70.

On the charge of publishing fake

WHO IS MABIRIZI?

Hassan Male Mabirizi was born in 1987 to the late Mohammed Mutumba and the late Mastula Ndwaddewazibwa of Mukono district. He holds a bachelor's degree in Law from Makerere University. Mabirizi came into the limelight when he dragged the Kabaka of Buganda, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II, to court for what he described as the illegal collection of land fees known as *Busulu* from those occupying land in Buganda. Since then, he has dragged to court a number of high-profile people in the country, in addition to critiquing them on social media platforms in a way that some argue degrades them.

news, prosecution alleges that on the same day, Mabirizi, via the same *TikTok* account, published an audio-visual news story wherein he stated that Justice of the Court of Appeal Musa Ssekaana is also a conman.

The offence is drawn from section 110(e) of the UCC licensing Regulations of 2019.

DECLINES TO TAKE PLEA

When asked to take a plea by the presiding chief magistrate, Ritah Neumbe Kidasa, Mabirizi declined, accusing her of bias.

Mabirizi has been ordered to file a formal application giving reasons why the chief magistrate should disqualify herself from the case. He was accordingly remanded until April 15 when he will reappear in court.

Mabirizi was arrested in February this year following a viral video. He was arraigned in court on February 27 and he remains on remand to date.

Commenting on the situation, Uganda Law Society vice-president Anthony Asiimwe described the development as persecution to those with dissenting views.