

# MAKERERE, STRIKING LECTURERS FAIL TO AGREE

BY UMARU KASHAKA

Hopes for a speedy end to the strike at Makerere University are fading fast as lecturers and the administration fail to agree on the procedures to remove the impasse.

A meeting between striking lecturers and management led by the acting vice-chancellor, Dr Eria Hisali, ended in a stalemate on Friday.

*Sunday Vision* has learnt that management's pleas to the deans and heads of departments to return to work fell on deaf ears as the strike entered its sixth day.

"As the academic heads, we supported the three suspended leaders and demanded their immediate reinstatement, before we get back to work, now we do not know what will follow," a source, said.

The three suspended leaders are Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA) chairperson Dr Deus Kamunyu Muhwezi, Makerere Administrative Staff Association (MASA) chairperson Bennet Magara and his general secretary, Joseph Kalema.

They were suspended over allegedly inciting staff to disrupt university activities.

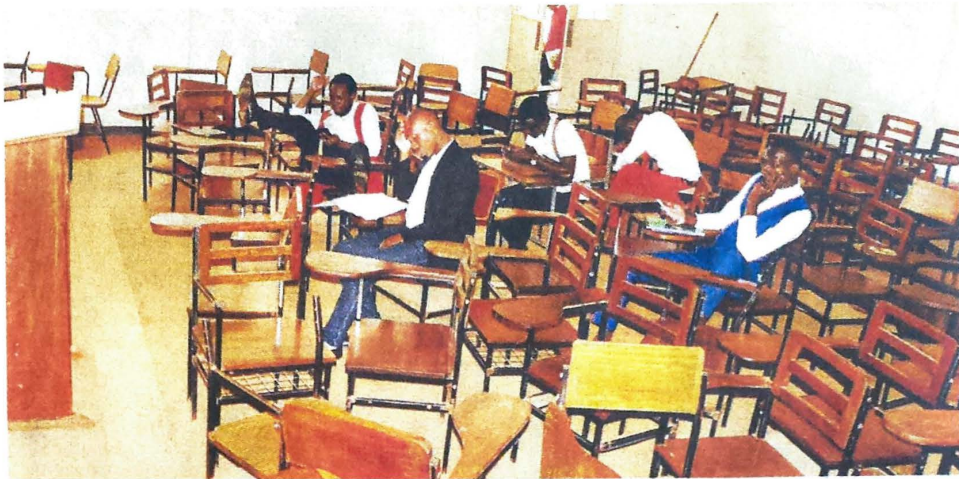
MUASA vice-chairman Prof. Edward Mwavu said they will not suspend the strike, until their suspended colleagues, including Ruth Eteu, the MASA representative in the council, are reinstated.

Eteu was recently blocked by the Police from attending the first sitting of the council on the grounds that she was leading goons — Magara and Kalema — to disrupt university activities.

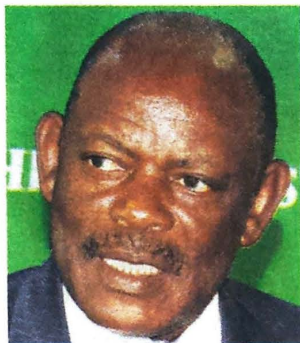
"We are committed to ending this impasse amicably. The vice-chancellor, Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe and his team should lift suspensions of our leaders because that is within their hands as top managers. It does not require the council to sit. Eteu should also be allowed to do her work as MASA representative and if there is a case against her, it should be heard by the competent body within our country," Mwavu said.

Dr Muhammad Kiggundu, who has just been appointed as manager, communications and international relations, said the primary reason for the strike was the sh29.5b, which included arrears of salary enhancement for academic staff and the sh4.5b arrears for the support staff of all government universities.

"The money was provided by the government and so the issue was resolved. However, regarding other demands, the staff association leadership on Wednesday, agreed with management that they should be attended to by the University



Students at Makerere University. Lecturers say they have suspended classes, until their colleagues are reinstated



Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe

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Council. The association leaders were rational and understood that,” Kiggundu said.

Kiggundu, however, said the contentious issues were the reinstatement of their suspended leaders and the removal of the recently approved amendment in the university's Human Resources Manual (2009), which allows administrative disciplinary proceedings to continue, parallel to court proceedings.

"On those two issues, we did not agree," he said.

Kiggundu said the council, chaired by Lorna Magara, agreed to set up committees to handle the specialties of their demands.

"The university management has set up a committee under which Dr Muhwezi will be appearing and when he appears it (suspension issue) will be sorted out by the committee. So, the committee has powers to sort it out because it has eminent members, who are dedicated," Kiggundu said.

Prof. Nawangwe said he would not be pressured into reinstating the suspended leaders without subjecting them to due process of the law.

"I have formed a committee to investigate both Magara and Kalema and another committee to investigate the activities of Muhwezi. We must follow the law," he said.

He denied that there was a strike at Makerere. "I am not aware of any legally declared strike at Makerere. The joint assembly of associations (which called for the strike) is not a legal assembly. It is not provided for in the law. It is just a gathering of individuals. So, any decision it takes cannot be respected by the University Council and management," Nawangwe argued.

He said the only colleges that had not started teaching were the ones of humanities and social sciences and business and management sciences. He blamed it on what he called a students' culture of not turning up for lectures in the first weeks of the semester.

"Students assume there are no classes in the first week of the semester and so they do not turn up and also lecturers do the same. Everybody should go back to duty normally. We have opened and classes are going on. Those who have not started classes should start them so that the university can run normally," he implored.

However, Muhwezi said he will not appear before any committee that Prof. Nawangwe sets up to investigate him.

"If the committee is set up by

him, I will not appear before it. He cannot sack me and set up a committee to investigate me. That is illegal. The committee will not be impartial. That committee to investigate me should have preceded his decision to sack me," he said.

Muhwezi added: "Even my other colleagues — Magara and Kalema — rejected the committee he had set up to investigate them, saying it did not have jurisdiction."

But Nawangwe hit back. "Unfortunately, that is what the law and the Human Resource Manual say: I suspend and appoint a committee, so he has no choice. He either co-operates or not. If he does not co-operate, we shall go straight to the Appointments Board and he will be tried there, without the benefit of him first appearing before the committee to be listened to. There is nobody else who is going to appoint the committee," Nawangwe contended.

He argued that the committee he has formed to investigate Kamunyu is composed of different people from different colleges. "So he cannot say it is not going to be impartial if he has not even appeared before it. It is his choice to appear or not to appear," he stressed.

## POLICE WEIGHS IN

Luke Owoyesigire, the Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson, said: "Ever since the lecturers' strike started, we have had our forces deployed at the premises and surrounding areas to deter possible violence. But we want to urge the administration and lecturers to find an amicable solution, before the situation gets out of hand. We do not want the situation to degenerate to the level where we have to confront anybody."

Additional reporting by John Masaba