

THE ATTACK

Agaba said he was attacked by UPDF soldiers at Matiri forest reserve in Kyenjojo on the orders of a forest supervisor at Kagora

By Gerald Tenywa

Tuhaise Agaba, a community-based volunteer who had been tracking illegal timber logging, is fighting for his life after a nasty encounter recently with UPDF soldiers at Matiri forest reserve, Kyarusizi in Kyenjojo district. Agaba said two armed UPDF soldiers were acting on the orders of Joselyn Kanweri, a forest supervisor at Kagora station under the National Forestry Authority (NFA). "I felt death close as they pounced on me like dogs," Agaba said, adding that as the soldiers rained blows on his head, they also threatened to kill him. Although Agaba counts himself lucky for surviving, it has, however, left his ears damaged. Consequently, hearing and movement have been impaired, according to a medical report from Buhinga Health Centre. This was further confirmed after medical examination over the weekend at Mulago Hospital in Kampala. Agaba was brought to Mulago after falling into a coma last Friday. Doctors specialising in ear, nose and throat at Mulago confirmed that Agaba's left ear and head had been injured. "We had to return to Fort Portal because it was too expensive to stay in Kampala," Agaba said.

Origin

Agaba got into trouble last month when he detected illegal harvesting of timber in



Agaba, a member of community monitoring group on forests, was beaten for reporting illegal logging in Matiri forest reserve

Forestry whistleblower beaten into coma

Origin

Agaba got into trouble last month when he detected illegal harvesting of timber in Maitiri. He reported the matter to Kanweri. He later took the patrol team and Kanweri to the scene of crime, where they recovered 392 timber pieces. It is reported that Kanweri promised Agaba sh100,000 as a reward for exposing the illegal activities in the forest.

However, when the activities did not stop, Agaba thought it was not wise to go back to Kanweri and reported to the sector manager who oversees Kanweri. Agaba went for another fact-finding mission with Kanweri's boss and according to sources, the sector manager later grilled Kanweri on why illegal activities were thriving under her watch. She also ordered her to give Agaba his reward immediately. Kanweri called Agaba later on the

NFA INVESTIGATING

"I have ordered the range manager to investigate and I expect this to be done by end of this week," said the acting executive director at NFA, Paul Buyera. Action from NFA is expected within two weeks since they have to conduct a disciplinary hearing depending on the

outcome of the investigation. Aisha Alibai, the NFA public relations manager, said the communities had given NFA an opportunity to work with them to protect the forests. "We will take action after the investigation."

pretext of giving him the reward. However, when Agaba got to the meeting, Kanweri told him that they had something to discuss first.

As Kanweri engaged Agaba, two UPDF soldiers came out of a house nearby. They started beating Agaba and demanded to know why he had reported Kanweri to her boss.

Police case

Tuhaise Agaba reported a case at Katooke Police Station and there is a case file CRR30/2018 (Tuhaise Agaba vs Joselyn Kanweri and two soldiers.

Community based monitors

Sam Nyakojo, a co-ordinator of a forest programme under Joint Efforts to Save the Environment (JESE), said whereas citizens who work as community-based monitors help to provide information about illegal forest activities some NFA officials connive with illegal timber dealers. JESE is a local NGO funded by CARE International to promote forestry governance in western Uganda.

UPDF officer's son kidnapped, three suspects arrested

By Chris Kiwawo

The Police have arrested three suspects in connection with the kidnap of the son of a senior Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) officer.

Dennis Alenyu, the son of Lt Col John Francis Angia, was kidnapped by unknown people on March 29. Angia heads Operation Wealth Creation in Amolatar district.

Alenyu, 33, is an information technology expert and he had been working with the UPDF's Information Computer Technology department at Magamaga army barracks near Jinja town.

The Police deputy spokesperson, Patrick Onyango, confirmed Alenyu's kidnap, saying a close relative reported the case at Magamaga Police post on April 3. Onyango added that the case had since been taken over by Mayuge Police Station for investigations.

"So far, three suspects (names withheld pending investigations) have been arrested and are being detained at Mayuge Police Station as investigations continue," Onyango said, adding that the kidnapers had asked the family for a sh15m ransom. Onyango said they were also investigating whether Alenyu's kidnap had any connections with



Dennis Alenyu

BETWEEN THE LINES:

A Police report on kidnap cases registered in 2017 indicates that 15 people were rescued, one found dead and eight victims are still missing. So far 16 suspects have been charged in court

his side business of money lending. "He was a renowned moneylender within Magamaga barracks," Onyango added. "Yesterday, the kidnapers allowed him (Alenyu) to talk to one of his aunts who confirmed that he recognised his voice, which means he is alive."

Other cases

Alenyu's kidnap comes in the wake of the kidnap of a pupil, 9-year-old Fatuma Nabalanda, from Nabirumba

Primary School in Buyende district.

In this case, Police arrested a one Masula, after she went to the girl's school and claimed she was going to take her to her home in Irapa village, Buyende, but instead took her to a lodge in Kamuli district, from where she asked for a sh4m ransom from her parents.

However, the case that moved many to tears happened barely two months ago when Susan Magara, 28, was kidnapped and murdered.

Susan was kidnapped on February 7, and her body was recovered from Kitiko village along the Entebbe expressway on February 27. She was killed 21 days after her killers sought a ransom of \$1m (sh3.6b) from her family. Susan was the cashier at the Hoima-based Bwendero Dairy Farm.

A daughter of businessman John Fitzgerald Magara, Susan was buried at her ancestral home in Hoima. Patrick Agaba alias Pato has since

been arrested in South Africa as the prime suspect in the murder of Susan. Agaba is alleged to have received the ransom of \$200,000 (over sh700m), which Susan's family paid to kidnapers in a bid to rescue her. Agaba and another suspect, Patrick Kasajja, believed to be a close family member to the Magaras reportedly fled to South Africa after the gruesome murder.

The Ugandan government is still negotiating with South African authorities to have Agaba extradited, while Kasajja is still on the run. Ugandan security operatives travelled to South Africa and got in touch with South African authorities to secure the extradition of Agaba and also have Kasajja arrested.

A copy of a Police summary report on kidnap cases registered in 2017 indicates that 15 people were recovered alive, one found dead and eight victims are still missing.