

## Police, civil society agree to partner

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Police boss Andrew Felix Kaweesi flags off the police band for a march to Sharing Hall, Nsambya, PHOTO/John Agaba newvision

By John Agaba

**KAMPALA - The Police together with civil society organizations in the country have launched a partnership that will see the forces get special trainings on how best they can enforce law.**

The partnership was launched at the Nsambya Sharing Hall and is spearheaded by the John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre.

It is funded by the Irish Embassy in Uganda at a cost of 15,000 Euros (about sh54m) and will last three years.

The Archbishop of Gulu Diocese John Baptist Odama noted that presently the relationship between the forces and public has become a “little problematic” – something that has diminished the trust and belief the police are there to protect the citizens.

In a message delivered by Msgr. John Baptist Kawuta, Odama who is also the president of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, said that excessive use of force and frequent resort to extreme measures such as tear gas resulted in a hostile attitude towards the forces.

The Archbishop said the Police force exists to ensure law and order and is supposed to protect citizens, guarantee their safety and security.

He, however, acknowledged that at times the police have to deal with very aggressive and violent crowds when demonstrations turn into riots and that many a time they are ill-equipped for these extreme situations in terms of equipment, human resources, and training.

## **'Friend of society'**

He said that the partnership was intended to improve this strained relation.

Under the partnership, the police will be engaged in a series of trainings on how best they can deal with such crowds without necessarily coercing the civilians.

There will also be lobbying and advocacy for improved welfare of the forces and initiating an ongoing dialogue between the civil society and police and engaging the media through talk shows.

The project intends to look at providing a forum for exchange, debate, and discussion between the civil society and the police.

The representative board of governors John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre Fr. William Klauer said it was important for the public and the civil society and other sectors in society to express their grievances freely and openly when confronted with injustices.

"Citizens have a right to demonstrate and they have the freedom of expression as guaranteed in the constitution of Uganda," he said.

According to him, peaceful protestors should be allowed to assemble and receive the security they need from the Police.

He said that police should be a friend of society, so to say, through for instance, facilitating public protests while maintaining law and order.

"Street protests should always remain peaceful, and should respect human life as well as private and public property. In no circumstance is there any justification for loss of life or destruction of property," said Klauer.

Kampala Metropolitan Police boss, Andrew Felix Kaweesi, challenged the civil society organizations to also teach the public that they have to be responsible other than stopping at emphasizing human rights.

He said that while it was constitutional that citizens' rights be observed, it was equally constitutional that citizens live responsibly.

"Citizens can't run into other people's shops just because they are demonstrating. They will be infringing on these other people's rights.

"I would like to see the civil society people also teach citizens about these issues," said Kaweesi.

He pointed out that some civil society organizations "put on two coats", meaning, today they are championing human rights, and the next day they are politicians.

"Let politicians do their work. You too do your work. There are a lot of other critical issues to take care of."

His sounding call to civil society organizations was that they should be impartial organizations fostering civilians' interests.

Find more information at:

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/640075-police-civil-society-agree-to-partner.html>