

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT BECAME DISORDERLY AND REFUSED TO LISTEN TO THE HOUSE SPEAKER

By Vision Reporters

Drama, chaos as Parliament elects EALA representatives

When Speaker of Parliament Rebecca Kadaga walked into the chambers of Parliament yesterday, she must have had a premonition that the session she was about to preside over was an unusual one.

The five-hour session was meant to give candidates seeking to represent Uganda at the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) a platform to campaign before the elections by later in the evening.

When Kadaga made her entrance in the morning, the seats of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) were festooned with campaign posters of different candidates vying to represent Uganda at the EALA and some lawmakers held placards.

Earlier, the chambers had been reverberating with songs and sloganeering as legislators, especially NRM, made a raucous case for their party's candidates.

"Please respect the decorum of the House and treat all candidates with respect. Put away those posters. Do not interrupt or intimidate any candidate because these are all Ugandan candidates," Kadaga said before summoning the first candidate, Martin Agaba, an independent, to address the House in seven minutes.

However, Kadaga's pleas fell on deaf ears as she struggled to preside over a particularly rowdy and raucous session that offended every known tenet of parliamentary decorum as enshrined in rules of procedure of Parliament.

To Kadaga's chagrin, at times tersely bellowing out, "Order, order, honourable members, order," lawmakers repeatedly barracked and interrupted candidates they were opposed to.

At one point, MPs Moses Kasibante and Allan Sewanyana nearly traded punches with Kasanda North MP, Patrick Nsamba, as the House degenerated into a melee over attempts by a section of lawmakers to prevent FDC's Ingrid Turinawe from campaigning.

Attired in a white shirt, black jacket and maroon necktie, Agaba failed to capture the attention of lawmakers — promising to advocate for the start of "Museveni cup," a soccer tournament akin to the one named after Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame.

However, it was two-time Bukedea Woman MP and former internal affairs minister Rose Akol and Alglessia Akwi's grasp of issues pertinent to regional integration that initially captured the attention of members.

"Representing Uganda at EALA is a diplomatic role I will ably execute. We need to consolidate achievements of customs union, common market and promote regional security in order to foster regional development," Akol said to a din of, "let's vote now, lets vote now," from NRM benches.

Reeling off her stellar performance during her tenure as a lawmaker in which she served as parliamentary commissioner and chairperson of the influential budget committee, Akol said her grasp of regional issues makes her ready to represent Uganda at EALA from day - one.

Akol also reminded MPs that when they finally retire or get booted out by a fickle electorate, they will retire with a hefty package due to her role in creating the parliamentary pension scheme.

As a matter of irony, among the lawmakers that gave Akol the wildest cheers was longtime rival Anita



Some of the MPs Mohammad Nsereko (third-left), Mubaraka Munyagwa (centre) and Allan Ssewanyana (third-right) arguing as chaos erupts in Parliament during the EALA elections yesterday. Photo by Miriam Namutebi

Leading candidates

The Ugandan Parliament yesterday sat to elect the nine members to represent Uganda in the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), by 5:00pm MPs had started queuing up in Parliament's parking yard to elect the nine out of the 47 candidates that were contesting for the coveted slots.

The rules of procedure indicate that nine citizens expressive of as much as possible, all shades of opinion with representation in Parliament are elected to EALA by the law makers but not from their own number.

By press time, tallying of the votes was still going on. However, according to election observers that *New Vision* talked to, the National Resistance Movement's (NRM) Rose Akol, Mathias Kasamba, Mary Mugenyi, Paul Musamali Mwasa, Dennis Namara and George Odongo were in the lead.

While on the other hand, Democratic Party's Fred Mukasa Mbidde, Uganda People's Congress (UPC) candidate Christopher Opoka and Suzan Nakawuki who ran as an independent were also ahead of the other candidates. This means that although Forum for Democratic Change's (FDC), Ibi Florence Ekwau, appeared to have some votes to her name her chances remained slim, while Ingrid Turinawe was totally edged out.

It took the intervention of NRM Chief Whip, Ruth Nankabirwa and veteran lawmakers — Cecilia Ogwal and Felix Okot Ogong to convince some rowdy lawmakers to resume their seats.

And when she started to speak, amid latent heckling and screeching by some MPs, Turinawe did not mince words.

"At the end of the day, I have emerged the winner. I have managed to expose what you are. I am the winner. Pigs will remain pigs," Turinawe said, vowing never to abandon any cause she deems dear to her heart.

Some MPs started streaming out, but Turinawe rumbled on, barely audible above a cacophony of noise. It took six hours for the 47 candidates to campaign before MPs voted thereafter.

Story compiled by Moses Walubiri, Nicholas Wassajja, Mary Karugaba and Henry Sekanjako

EALA MP candidates

No	NAME	PARTY	No	NAME	PARTY
1	Mukasa Fred Mbidde	DP	25	Mutyaba Mathew	Indep
2	Ekwau Florence Ibi	FDC	26	Muyanja Hassan Ssentongo	Indep
3	Kamateneti Ingrid Turinawe	FDC	27	Mwambazi Joseph Kazura	Indep
4	Akol Rose Okullu	NRM	28	Mwambu Herbert Emmanuel	Indep
5	Musamali Paul Mwasa	NRM	29	Mwanje Charles	Indep
6	Mugenyi Mary	NRM	30	Nakawuki Susan Nsamu	Indep
7	Kasamba Mathias	NRM	31	Nalubega Mariam	Indep
8	Namara Dennis	NRM	32	Nassanga Jackline Oba	Indep
9	Odongo George Stephen	NRM	33	Nyero Francis Elton Lakelle	Indep
10	Opoka-Okumu Christopher	UPC	34	Obua-Ogwai Benson	Indep
11	Agaba Martin Edgar	Indep	35	Okwere David Beecham	Indep
12	Akwi Alglessia Ogojo	Indep	36	Oluma Kennedy	Indep
13	Ariong Hellen Adeke	Indep	37	Oola Samuel	Indep
14	Basiime Richard Bashenyi	Indep	38	Otim Alfred	Indep
15	Bayiga Cissy Oeschger	Indep	39	Paito Andrew Mutegi	Indep
16	Bwengye Lauben Muhangi	Indep	40	Ruhinda Richard Nganwa	Indep
17	Drito Alice	Indep	41	Seruwuge Yasin	Indep
18	Ibanda Twaha	Indep	42	Ssali Godfrey	Indep
19	Kaluuba Enoch	Indep	43	Ssali Khalid Lule	Indep
20	Kenyangi Janet Kikwaya	Indep	44	Tusiime Robert Alaali	Indep
21	Luyinda Fred	Indep	45	Weriike Gerald Wanzala	Indep
22	Matyoli David Innocent	Indep	46	Yamureebire Jothan	Indep
23	Mpiriwe Rachel	Indep	47	Yiga Joel Kamoga	Indep
24	Muhango Chris	Indep			

Among, who defeated her in the recent parliamentary elections.

And then came Akwi, whose journey from a nondescript primary school in Usuk, in present-day Katakwi, to Namagunga, Makerere University and Georgia University for a master's in law captured the limagination of many MPs.

During her sojourn in the NGO world, Akwi said, she helped draft an alternative treaty for the creation of East Africa because initially the draft had glaring gaps.

"I believe that the issue of regional integration goes beyond partisan consideration and I hope members' choices are not coloured by patronage," Akwi said.

Before FDC's Florence Ibi Ekwau made her case to be considered for the nine slots available for Uganda at EALA, Alice Drito, an independent candidate, spawned a ripple of murmurs with her submission.

Drito promised, if elected, to foster consensus on term limits and age limits for the presidency in East Africa

— an issue that is as controversial as it is touchy in the region.

"We need to reach consensus on the issue of term and age limit in the region so that these issues do not become a reason for disintegration," Drito said to a ripple of murmurs.

For Ekwau, the contest for an EALA seat tested her political acumen. The former Kaberamaido Woman MP ditched FDC's blue colour for an orange dress and did not mention FDC in her introductory remarks in what was a clear attempt to strike a bipartisan chord in a House that was divided along party lines.

Promising to tackle issues of human trafficking and improve education standards, Ekwau, to prolonged ululation said: "I appear before you at an historic time — a time when the Speaker, NRM secretary general and both Government and Opposition chief whips are women."

However, there were no niceties for Ekwau's FDC colleague Turinawe whose appearance was greeted by a cacophony of whistles and screeching by placard-holding lawmakers.

"Order, order please honourable members, order," Kadaga bellowed out tersely as shouting MPs stood up with some such as Geoffrey Macho, removing the microphone from the rostrum where candidates were campaigning from.

The hostility among MPs towards Turinawe cuts across the political divide — with some lawmakers accusing her of being the brains behind piglets bearing MPs' names that are routinely dropped at Parliament.

MPs Muhammad Nsereko, Maurice Kibalya and Hatwib Katoto tested Kadaga's patience. At one time, Kadaga stopped making orders, waiting for the bedlam to naturally die down.