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## Interview: Charles Atwoki Kagenda

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# Patriot speaks out on Museveni's hell-hole

*Linda de Hoyos interviewed Charles Atwoki Kagenda on May 3. Mr. Kagenda, a long-standing leader of the Ugandan Peoples Congress, was most recently the director of the UPC's Bureau for Research and Information.*

**EIR:** Let's start with how President Museveni won the elections in May 1995, even though everyone knows that he lost.

**Kagenda:** It is not correct to say that Museveni *won* the elections. The elections were rigged from the beginning. There was not a free and fair platform, right from the constitution. The constitution never allowed a free and fair platform. The setting up of the electoral commission, the demarcation of constituencies—election rules were drawn up in such a way that any opposition to Museveni would not really stand. What is to our credit, is that we managed even to put up an opposition at all. To me that was where our success was. We did not simply put up an opposition; we put up a *strong* opposition, against all these odds. So much so, that at some stage, Museveni felt threatened. In fact, for part of the campaign, Museveni felt he was going to be defeated, and because of that, they used extraordinary methods to ensure that he would not be defeated. So, we were not allowed a campaign.

I can tell you for sure, that in Kabarole district, which I know very well, where I myself was one of the campaign agents for Ssemogerere, we were not allowed any campaign at all. We could not even open an office in Fort Portal. We struggled against odds to open an office; we did secure a building. We held two meetings, and we were stormed and stoned. We were stormed and stoned. The whole weekend there was turmoil in Fort Portal. This was reported in the press. I personally sent complaints to the Election Commission—to no avail. We were not allowed to hold even one meeting in the entire Kabarole district.

I will tell you more. I took campaign materials. I took Ssemogerere photographs and distributed them to our contacts throughout the entire district. I will tell you, not a single person could be allowed to put up *one* photograph of Ssemogerere anywhere in the entire district.

So, people were totally suppressed. I was brutally beaten attempting to put up photographs of Ssemogerere in my own village. The National Resistance Councils, from the branches, from the rural councils, the district councils, the local defense forces, the paramilitary local defense forces could not allow

anybody to display a poster. I have a young man in my village who was beaten nearly to death for wearing a Ssemogerere t-shirt that I had given him myself.

There was no campaigning allowed against Yoweri Museveni in the whole of the western region.

Where we made an effort to go, people came to our rallies very terrified. Terrified. But our rallies were attended, and those who attended them knew that they were going back to be beaten. In a rally at Kamwenge district, even at the rally, we were stormed. In Bunyanabu County, the agents of Ssemogerere were beaten. In Mwenge County, they were beaten. I saw them.

Ssemogerere was not even allowed to go to Kisoro [at the border of Rwanda]. Why? Because the Rwandan Patriotic Front crossed. The RPF crossed and came and *took over* Kisoro on the day that Ssemogerere was supposed to be there.

You have to say, that from that point of view, in fact, in the entire western region, there was no election as such. Everything was rigged, and the results were as they were. They simply announced the results: These are the votes for Museveni; these are the votes for Ssemogerere. Ssemogerere never even got 1,000 votes in the whole Kabarole district. Yet, in 1980, Ssemogerere got more than 45% of the votes in that district.

**EIR:** Was this the same in other areas?

**Kagenda:** I am telling you about the region of Uganda I know, where Museveni, by his own record, obtained more than 90% of the votes. It was suicidal to campaign against Museveni in those areas. So, the results are announced; Museveni got more than 97% of the votes in that region.

And I want to tell you, that in this region of Uganda, Museveni is not popular. I am speaking about an area which I know about. To go into Fort Portal and Bundibugyo [with the Ssemogerere campaign], was suicidal!

So there were no free and fair elections in 1995 in Uganda. At one point, in my home district, I was about to be killed by the local defense forces.

**EIR:** You mean by the army itself?

**Kagenda:** The local defense force is not even a constitutional body. It uses military and police matériel; it uses military and police money; it uses military and police guns, but it is an illegal body. Even in Museveni's constitution, they are not provided for.

**EIR:** But that is part of the National Resistance Councils?

**Kagenda:** Part of the system.

**EIR:** In daily life, how does the National Resistance Council operate?

**Kagenda:** The National Resistance Movement, so-called, is what is the state of Uganda. What we have is a police state.

They are no longer called resistance councils; they are called local councils. Local council 1, local council 2, local council 3, local council 5, which is a district council.

**EIR:** Are they elected?

**Kagenda:** You can say now that they are being elected, but they are all rigged in position. You cannot hold proper elections in Uganda today. We have tested that. When we sponsored Ssemogerere to be the candidate, our real target was to test whether indeed you can hold elections in Uganda. We have proved by action that there is no electoral process that can produce any meaningful results with Museveni in charge. We have said that before, and people didn't believe it. For as long as Yoweri Museveni is in charge, you cannot hold elections in Uganda, where people can express themselves openly and freely. When you cannot express yourself openly and freely, you are wasting your time. All the institutions of the state are organized against elections, against free elections.

**EIR:** What do the local councils do and how do they operate?

**Kagenda:** These are terrorist agencies. See, the local councils are the administrative organs of the state. They are the executive organs of the state; they are the judicial organs of the state. They are part of the police. They handle the security; they handle judicial matters; they handle administrative matters; they handle business! You cannot, in Uganda, get a license, unless you go through the local councils. You cannot even become a butcher. You cannot get a passport from Uganda, unless you have the signature of the local councils. That National Resistance Movement should have been ended by now, but now they are constitutionalizing it!

**EIR:** Are these people armed also?

**Kagenda:** Everybody is armed. All of them have military training. *Chakamuchaka* is a drilling process. Even old women are being drilled in militarization. They call it "democratizing the gun."

All I have told you is that our campaign, our sponsoring of Ssemogerere as a joint candidate of the three political parties, was a test—the Ugandan Peoples Congress, the Democratic Party, and the Nationalist Liberal Party—that was a test, that was the litmus test of whether you can have a democratic electoral process in Uganda.

**EIR:** These councils control everything? How many people in a normal village, or parish?

**Kagenda:** A parish in Uganda may be up to 1,000 voters. It could be up to 3,000 people.

**EIR:** How many people would be in the local council?

**Kagenda:** According to National Resistance Council statute, every Ugandan is a member, whether you like it or not.

**EIR:** But only some people have power, though.

**Kagenda:** But that is the strategy. Every Ugandan is a member, of the local council 1. That is the theory. Every citizen elects the executive of local council 1. Then the local council officials from different organizations in different areas, form local council 2, and they elect an executive, and local council 2 executives from different areas form local council 3. In effect, the local councils don't work; they only work through their executives.

**EIR:** It is the executives, then, who are the enforcers?

**Kagenda:** Yes, of the law, and the administration. You have in Uganda a totalitarian state. The Resistance Council system, or local council system, is similar to the Communist Party system. It is similar to the Jamahiriya system of Libya. In fact, the model is Jamahiriya of Libya. It is the Green Revolution thing in Libya, applied to Uganda. That is what Museveni has put in place. And people do not like it, because it was established by military might.

**EIR:** Suppose somebody is elected to one of these councils that Museveni doesn't like.

**Kagenda:** You can't. You can't be elected. How would you be elected? You would be terrorized in your house. You would not even be a candidate. Unless you surrender to them, you will not even be a candidate.

**EIR:** What does it mean to surrender to them?

**Kagenda:** That you follow their leadership. You are talking to somebody who has tested every word I am telling you, from the beginning. My problem with the Museveni system, is that from 1985-86, I refused to surrender. I refused even to attend the village council meetings. I was accused of not attending the village council meetings. I said, "I am a member of the Ugandan Peoples Congress. I want to attend only meetings of the Ugandan Peoples Congress." But they refused to permit the Ugandan Peoples Congress to hold meetings. If you attend a meeting, you attend *their* meeting, not yours. And that has been the struggle. All our members have been terrorized; to be called a member of the Ugandan Peoples Congress in Uganda is to be put up for slaughter. And so, even members of the Ugandan Peoples Congress in most areas are unwilling to describe themselves as so. The members of the Democratic Party are unwilling to describe themselves as so, because they will be terrorized.

When Ssemogerere came to Fort Portal, I organized everything. I will tell you a story: For the rally, I asked a pastor to lead the prayer to start the rally. This is the archdeacon of the Catholic Church in this city; he was the most senior member of the Catholic Church there. I asked him to lead the prayer, and he said, "Sorry, no, no, no. I am not going to lead the prayer." Because if you lead the prayer, you suffer. The Catholic sisters, I found out, had to go to their Superior to go to the rally, and they were told, "No, just send one." The Catholic sisters were not allowed to go and attend Ssemogerere's rally.

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We wanted Ssemogerere to go and sleep in the guest house at the Catholic parish there. He is a prominent Roman Catholic; he is very well known in that area. He even taught at the school there. But the father told us, please, don't put us in trouble. We had paid, and the money was given back to us. So, we had to take him to a hotel. For the government to hear that Ssemogerere had slept in the parish guest house of the Catholic Church, that would mean persecution for the Catholic Church.

**EIR:** The myth in the Western press is that the Ugandan economy is booming. Is that the case?

**Kagenda:** I spoke to someone in the U.S. Agency of International Development about this. I said, "Let's see the evidence that the economy is booming." Let me tell you, from 1986 up to now, the Ugandan Railways Corp. operates only the line between Tororo and Kasese. The line between Tororo and Pakwach has not been functioning. A whole area of the country has been devastated — Teso, Lango, Acholi, West Nile — which are productive areas. The economies have been devastated. There is no cattle there anymore. They cannot cultivate the crops they used to cultivate before.

**EIR:** Why can't they cultivate?

**Kagenda:** Because there is *war*. A whole northern half of Uganda has lost more than 90% of the economic base.

The Uganda Commercial Bank is the leading bank in Uganda. It is collapsed. The Uganda Commercial Bank has collapsed — it was looted, by the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the National Resistance Army. The money was taken to fight the war in Rwanda. You go find out: Kagame has a debt in Uganda Commercial Bank. Right now, Ugandan Commercial Bank has been put up for sale, and no one will buy it. They have even financed some British bank to market the Ugandan Commercial Bank. Nobody will buy it. It is collapsed. If that has collapsed, what other banks are there in Uganda?

Barclays Bank now runs one branch. They used to have a branch in every leading city — there used to be more than 40. Today, they have only one branch, in Kampala alone. Is that evidence of a booming economy? Grindlays bank had more than 20 branches in Uganda. Today they are running one bank. What statistics are these people reading, to say that the Uganda economy is booming? Go and ask about banking, how many banks are functional. In the entire Uganda, the

economy has collapsed. Uganda Railway Corp. is not running at even 10% of what it used to do. The banks have all closed their branches.

**EIR:** What has happened to the population?

**Kagenda:** The population has no money! The Uganda shilling now is 1,050 shillings to the dollar. In 1970, it was 8 shillings to a dollar! Are you telling me that Uganda is doing better now? Even in 1985-86, when Museveni took over, the shilling was at 550. Now it is 1,050. Is that evidence of a booming economy?

There are people who are stealing. Everybody who is doing well in Uganda is a thief. There are reports that many vehicles have been imported, second-hand vehicles from Japan, but where are they? They are in the taxi park in Kampala, controlled by Museveni's wife and Salim Saleh — who have almost all the taxis in Uganda. You try to travel anywhere by public means — you can't go anywhere. Because all the traffic is concentrated in one place, the capital, and maybe to the southwest towards Mbarara. That's a busy route. The rest of Uganda is not busy.

The economy of Uganda is doing very badly. I can tell you in my own district, more than 50 schools were closed in 1992.

**EIR:** What kinds of schools?

**Kagenda:** Primary schools. Closed, closed for lack of students, because parents cannot afford to pay school fees. Parents in the rural areas cannot afford to pay school fees. There is not a drop of medicine in the rural clinics. Schools are collapsing. The International Monetary Fund is saying the Ugandan economy is doing well; God bless the IMF. The World Bank is saying the Ugandan economy is doing very well, but Uganda is third from the bottom from the ranking of the least-developed. It is descending.

**EIR:** Life expectancy is continuing to —

**Kagenda:** It has dropped! People are dying anyway.

**EIR:** They are dying of AIDS, and other diseases, or mostly AIDS?

**Kagenda:** They are dying for *neglect*. The word is that people are dying because of neglect. There is no service that is being provided by the state to the benefit of the population. I

want to tell you that the Ugandan medical service was one of the best on the continent. The Ugandan education system was one of the best on the continent. You read the statistics of 1950s, 1960s, and even 1970s, and early 1980s, and you will see. Idi Amin never committed the havoc that Museveni has committed today in Uganda.

**EIR:** What do you mean?

**Kaganda:** The economy. The economy now is being sold to Asians, to British-Asians, not Asians. I am sorry, I do not mean Indians. These are not Indians. The little trade that there is, is all being shared there between Museveni and his British colleagues and some people from Belgium, France, Germany, and Britain.

The place is being recolonized, and they say the economy is booming.

The foreign exchange bureaus are draining Uganda, and the bureaus are being run by Museveni, and Eriya Kategaya, and Salim Saleh, and the British-Asians. There is no money in Uganda, except that which is circulating among them.

The people who have money in Uganda are the military. That's what they are getting from the U.S. and Britain, and the Scandinavian countries, from the IMF. The money that is going to Uganda, may not be assigned to the military, but it is going to the military anyway.

**EIR:** Could you elaborate on the British influence in Uganda?

**Kaganda:** The Ugandan Peoples Congress has always given the foreign ambassadors of these countries all the information they need. So, they know much more than they are willing to say. I know *in camera* they agree; they know it is not possible to have free and fair elections in Uganda. The secretary of the Commonwealth Secretariat said that the Commonwealth was not willing to be involved in the Ugandan elections, because we know that the constitution and the law is against the declared position of the Commonwealth leaders in Harare; it is against the Harare Declaration [1995]. But I am amazed that after the elections, they have now reversed their position. They are willing to accommodate the Ugandan parliamentary delegation in the Commonwealth parliamentary association. They are only contradicting themselves; they know the truth: The Ugandan Parliament today does not qualify as a representative institution, because the political parties were not allowed to participate in the elections.

**EIR:** When you say, Uganda is being recolonized, who is the recolonizer?

**Kaganda:** Who put Museveni in power? He is their agent. His leaders today are British. The Conservative Party seized Museveni and put him in, and they deal with him in business. There are some American businessmen who have key interests in dealing with Museveni. They see Museveni as the new broom that can be used to sweep across Africa.

## IV. Museveni's wars of annihilation against Uganda

During the 1996 Presidential campaign, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni hailed himself for becoming a duly elected President, after ten years in the post. In rallies, he attempted to justify his previous years of un-elected rule: "I would like to distinguish my use of violence from other dictators. We used the gun to put an end to the use of the gun. There was no other way."

However, a review of the grim realities of life in Uganda since 1980, when Museveni took to the bush to fight the results of what he charged were "rigged" elections, reveals a different story. It is finally becoming widely acknowledged that Ugandan troops were among the invading forces against Zaire in October 1996 and remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also known by many in the West that the Rwandan Patriotic Front invasion of neighboring Rwanda to the south in 1990 and in 1994 was carried out by a section of the Ugandan Army—some say up to 20% of its 100,000-man force.

What is far less known, is that since Museveni took to the bush in 1980 to gun his way to power, and again, since he marched into Kampala on Jan. 29, 1986, *Uganda has never been at peace within its own borders*. Not only has the "use of the gun" not been ended. It has been assiduously promoted by Museveni and his intransigent stance that any rebel force must surrender to him unconditionally.

Today, as **Map 2** shows, entire regions of Uganda are at war. In northern Uganda, where Museveni continues to fight his 11-year war against the Lord's Resistance Army, and where his cohort John Garang's Sudanese People's Liberation Army is installed with Museveni's protection, the entire economy has been collapsed; its population uprooted again and again, and dying. The region is a war zone for Museveni's own revenge against northern Uganda and his British-dictated war against Sudan. The result is that the northern third of the country is virtually cut off from the other parts, because there is no method of safe transport from say, Kampala, to Gulu, save by plane.

Now the west has also become a war zone in the last year, where the Alliance of Democratic Forces, a force regrouping former guerrilla organizations, has managed to seize towns and is going into major battles against the Ugandan Popular Defense Forces (UPDF). Insecurity reigns as well in the Kampala area itself, according to multiple sources. The only area apparently free from insurgent violence is southern Uganda, Museveni's home base, and where any funds remaining inside