

BY ARTHUR ARNOLD WADERO

Speaker Among, Ssenyonyi clash as MPs mourn Isodo

KAMPALA. A solemn sitting of Parliament held on Wednesday to pay tribute to the late former Ngora District Woman MP, Stella Apolot Isodo, was punctuated by a tense exchange between Speaker Anita Among and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament (LoP) Joel Ssenyonyi.

The remarks centred on alleged irregularities in the just-concluded presidential and parliamentary elections.

The confrontation erupted when Mr Ssenyonyi, while seconding a motion to honour the late legislator, raised concerns about alleged vote rigging, ballot stuffing, arrests, and killings that reportedly characterised the January 15 polls.

Speaker Among repeatedly directed

the Nakawa West MP to confine his remarks to a tribute to the deceased and avoid what she described as political commentary unrelated to the purpose of the special sitting.

"Hon LoP, with all due respect, can you focus on the purpose of this sitting? We can discuss this matter in the next session," Ms Among told Mr Ssenyonyi.

She added: "Let's first remember my sister Isodo, and then we can address the elections in the next session. For now, let's honour Stella."

However, Mr Ssenyonyi insisted that his remarks were part of his tribute and reflected the values and aspirations of the late Isodo, whom he said he had worked with closely.

"Right Honourable Speaker, I am sup-

porting the motion about a leader with whom I worked closely. I knew her aspirations, so I am speaking about someone I knew well. Please allow me to talk about my colleague," he said.

The exchange escalated as the Speaker continued to caution him against discussing election-related matters, prompting Mr Ssenyonyi to question whether she intended to speak on his behalf.

"Right Honourable Speaker, do you want to speak on my behalf now? I seek guidance because I am supporting the motion and speaking about my colleague whose heart and aspirations I knew," he said.

The standoff unfolded before mourners in the public gallery, including rela-

tives of the deceased, former MPs, and members of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA).

Contentious tribute

The special sitting had been convened to honour the late Isodo, who passed away earlier this month. The motion was moved by the State Minister for Agriculture in-charge of Fisheries on behalf of the Prime Minister, Ms Robinah Nabbanja, who is also the Leader of Government Business in Parliament.

Mr Ssenyonyi was listed on the Order Paper as the seconder.

At the start of his tribute, Mr Ssenyonyi described Isodo's death at the age of about 51 as "tragic and deeply painful," noting that it came at a time when the

country was emerging from a highly contested election period.

"The sudden death of Isodo comes at a time when Uganda has barely emerged from a highly contentious election marked by killings, abductions, torture, and widespread fear among citizens who dared to participate democratically," he said.

His remarks prompted Speaker Among to interrupt him, asking: "Is this an amendment we are making on the floor?" "This is my secondment. It can be accepted or rejected," Mr Ssenyonyi responded.

At the close of the sitting, Speaker Among ruled that the official tribute to be forwarded to the bereaved family would exclude political statements.