



L-R: Gen Kahinda Otafire, Maj Robert Kabuura, Maj Koozi Tumusime, Gen Yoweri Museveni, an unidentified judicial officer, Maj Gen Jim Muhwezi and Sir Peter Allen (then Chief justice) during the 1986 swearing-in ceremony at Parliament. COURTESY PHOTO

NRM pays tribute to patriots who ushered in fundamental change

Today's 40-year anniversary celebrations, at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds will be held under the theme 'Tribute to the Patriots who ushered in a Fundamental Change,' with President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni as the Chief Guest

BY CAESAR ABANGIRAH

Uganda marks 40 years since the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) victory that fundamentally altered the country's political, social, and economic trajectory.

The celebrations, at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds, today will be held under the theme "Tribute to the Patriots who ushered in a Fundamental Change," with President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni as the Chief Guest.

The anniversary commemorates January 26, 1986, when the NRM/A took power after a five-year guerrilla struggle, bringing to an end a prolonged period of political instability, violent conflict, and state collapse.

For many Ugandans, the day marks the beginning of a new chapter defined by peace, institutional rebuilding, and a

renewed sense of national purpose.

Speaking ahead of the celebrations, Emmanuel Lumala Dombo, the Director Communications and Public Relations at the NRM Secretariat described the 40th anniversary as both a moment of remembrance and reflection.

It is a time to honour the men and women, many of them young at the time, who sacrificed their lives and livelihoods to restore dignity, stability, and sovereignty to the country.

"This anniversary is about the patriots who believed Uganda could be better and were willing to pay the ultimate price to achieve that vision," Mr Dombo said.

"Their courage laid the foundation for the peace and progress the country enjoys today."

A victory rooted in fundamental change

Mr Dombo adds that the theme of this year's celebrations echoes the NRM's long-standing assertion that its struggle was not merely about changing leadership, but about introducing a fundamental change in how Uganda is governed.

"When President Museveni and his comrades launched the armed struggle in 1981, the country was emerging from a deeply contested political en-

vironment marked by disputed elections, weak institutions, and widespread insecurity," Dombo states.

In his previous Victory Day addresses, President Museveni has often emphasised that the struggle was driven by the need to restore democracy, end sectarian politics, and build a state anchored in the rule of law.

He has repeatedly credited the success of the NRM/A to discipline, clarity of purpose, and the support of ordinary Ugandans who yearned for peace.

"The NRM did not fight for power for its own sake," the President has said in past commemorations.

"We fought to correct historical mistakes and place Uganda on the path of sustainable development."

Honouring sacrifice, consolidating peace

Central to the 40th Victory Day celebrations is a tribute to the patriots combatants, civilians, and supporters, who contributed to the liberation struggle.

Many of them endured years

in the bush, while others provided intelligence, food, shelter, and moral support at great personal risk.

Their sacrifice, according to NRM leaders, laid the groundwork for the relative peace Uganda has experienced over the past four decades. Regions once ravaged by conflict have gradually stabilised, displaced communities have returned home, and national institutions have been rebuilt.

According to Ambrose Katunda, a senior information officer at the NRM Secretariat,

Peace has been the single most important enabler of Uganda's socio-economic transformation.

"It has allowed the government to invest in infrastructure, education, health, and economic reforms, while also expanding political participation," Mr Katunda Mwayi states.

From liberation to transformation

"Over the last 40 years, Uganda has undergone significant changes across multiple sectors. Roads, energy infra-

structure, and communication networks have expanded, linking markets and communities. Universal primary and secondary education programmes have increased access to schooling, while health indicators have steadily improved," Mr Katunda says, adding that the country adopted a Constitution that has guided governance for three decades and conducted multiple national elections.

"While debates about governance and democratic practice persist, the continuity of constitutional order marks a sharp contrast to the instability that characterised earlier decades," he said.

The 40th anniversary celebrations will also highlight the Movement's broader vision for the future to build on past gains while addressing emerging challenges such as youth unemployment, climate change, and regional integration.

National moment of reflection

The Kololo celebrations are expected to draw thousands of Ugandans from across the country, including veterans of the liberation struggle, youth, cultural leaders, and representatives of regional and international partners.

Cultural performances, military displays, and official speeches will form part of the programme, underscoring both remembrance and national pride.

For younger generations, many of whom were born after 1986, the anniversary offers an opportunity to connect with the country's history and understand the origins of the stability they have grown up with.

"This is not just a celebration of the past," Katunda states, adding: "It is a reminder of patriotism, unity, and service, the values that shaped Uganda's journey and how they must continue to guide us."

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POWER AFTER FIVE-
YEAR GUERRILLA
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