

BY DERRICK WANDERA

**KAMPALA:** The US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have separately called into question the conduct and results of the January 15 presidential elections in Uganda.

The two groups called for an independent, impartial, and transparent investigation into the credibility of the election results as well as reported killings, acts of violence, and human rights violations committed before, during, and after the polls.

They also cited preliminary reports by the election observer missions from the African Union (AU), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, as well as civil society groups that said: "the elections did not meet basic democratic standards."

Senator Jim Risch (R-Idaho), the chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, described the Ugandan elections as a "hollow exercise staged to legitimise President Museveni's sev-

# US, EU query conduct of Uganda polls

enth term and four decades in power."

Mr Risch said in a statement that Uganda is also linked to destabilising regional activities, including in South Sudan, making the regime an increasingly problematic exporter of instability.

"Tanzania and Uganda are moving along similar paths, raising serious concerns about what this portends for other countries with upcoming elections, including Ethiopia and Kenya," he said.

For more than four decades, Uganda has closely collaborated with the US on security operations in the region and across the continent.

The US government has, since 2007, provided more than \$2b (about Shs7.4t) for military operations in Somalia, where the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) has been the largest troop contributor to the African Union Missions (AMISOM) that has since transitioned into ATMIS and AUSSOM.



## Violence.

Collectively, these actions seriously call into question the credibility of the electoral process and the effective exercise of rights by Ugandan citizens," - letter from Members of European Parliament

Both the EU and the US government have been pivotal in providing both security and humanitarian aid to Uganda to bolster its management of the refugee influx from the unrest in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Horn of Africa.

But Mr Risch urged the US administration to reassess its security relationship with Uganda, beginning with a review of whether sanctions are warranted under existing authorities against specific actors, including Gen Muhoozi Kaineru-

gaba, the Chief of Defence Forces.

Over the past decade, Uganda has suffered a strained relationship with the West, including sanctions on its top government officials, among them Parliament Speaker Anita Among, over allegations of corruption and human rights violations.

But Presidential Press Secretary Sandor Walusimbi has dismissed the reports as "unserious matters."

"Why don't you ask those people to ask me these questions? Why are you being their agent? First, have you done an investigation of what they are raising to see whether they are true or not? Next time, call me for a comment on serious matters, not these trivialities. But also, I am not surprised that these questions are coming from *Daily Monitor*," Mr Walusimbi said, furiously.

The January 22 letter by Senator Risch to President Museveni also asked for investigations into what they termed as

arbitrary arrest and continued detention of Dr Sarah Bireete, who has been charged with unlawfully obtaining or disclosing voters' personal data.

On January 15, 2026, Justice Simon Byabakama, the Electoral Commission chairman, under total internet blackout, declared Mr Museveni, 81, winner of the presidential elections, after it reported he had garnered 71.65 percent of the total votes cast.

The MEPs indicated that the arbitrary arrests of Opposition politicians, and a nationwide Internet shutdown, followed months of voter suppression, including restrictions on opposition activities, harassment and detention of political activists, violent attacks on Opposition campaign rallies, voter intimidation, and severe limitations on freedoms of assembly, expression, and movement, made the election process fall below democratic standards.

"Collectively, these actions seriously call into question the credibility of the electoral process and the effective exercise of rights by Ugandan citizens," read in part a letter from Members of European Parliament.