

HAM ADMITS ROLE IN OWINO DEMOLITION

PHOTO BY STUART YIGA

Kampala business tycoon Hamis Kiggundu alias Ham, has admitted that his team was responsible for demolishing structures at St Balikuddembe Market, popularly known as Owino, saying the exercise was part of ongoing developments along the Nakivubo drainage corridor.

The structures, located a few metres from the Nakivubo Channel on Sebana Road in central Kampala, were demolished on Saturday night. The incident sparked protests from some vendors, who claimed the structures were their main source of livelihood.

Kiggundu said the project is part of the ongoing developments aimed at improving drainage and sanitation in the Nakivubo area.

He explained that his team followed due diligence procedures before the demolition, including compensating occupants of the affected lock-ups.

"Besides the sh3m which we gave each person to help them in the relocation of their merchandise, we have resolved to give each individual a lock-up on the new modern shops which we are planning to set up, without paying any rent for a period of one year," Kiggundu said.

According to him, a total of 48 occupants were operating in the demolished lock-ups and each received sh3m before the demolition was carried out.

Two traders, Robert Mukalazi and Mahad Ssali, confirmed that their lock-ups were affected during the demolition, but acknowledged receipt of compensation.

"We were many, and the majority of us have already received the money and we are assured of getting the lock-ups on the new modern structure once it's accomplished," Mukalazi said.

Kiggundu also defended the project, saying the redevelopment is necessary for Kampala's development and to improve the condition of the Nakivubo drainage system.

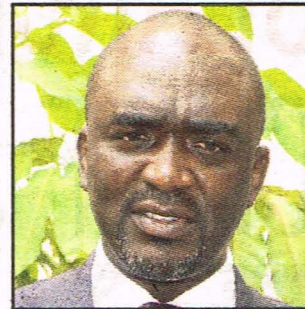
"Uganda, to develop regardless of our political differences, needs such steps, and what people need to know is that Nakivubo had turned into a criminal hideout and a dumping site for all sorts of garbage," he said.

Kiggundu added that the works are also intended to support improvements around the nearby Nakivubo Stadium.

"On top of that, as advised by CAF (Confederation of African Football) officials, Nakivubo Stadium cannot fit an international standard when the open drainage channels are left around it," he said.



Police officers manning security at a demolished structure at St Balikudembe Market (Owino) yesterday. The structure housing 46 lock-ups is suspected to have been demolished by city businessman Hamis Kiggundu on Saturday night. (Scan photo using Vision Digital Experience to watch video)



Daniel NuweAbiline



Hamis Kiggundu

vendors' property. She called upon the President to intervene in the matter, saying he is the only authority the perpetrators might fear and one who has often stood up for ordinary traders.

Joseph Lwanga, the chairperson of St Balikuddembe Stalls, Shops and Lock-up Owners' Association (SSLQA), threatened legal action against those responsible for the destruction.

"How can someone come at night and demolish poor vendors' property without following the legal process, including obtaining a demolition permit from the city authority?" Lwanga wondered.

He said taking the matter to court would help uncover those behind the act and ensure justice for the affected traders.

Individual traders also voiced their concerns. Ahmed Miti, a second-hand clothes vendor, and Margaret Nantume, a produce trader, said the demolition has already affected business operations.

They explained that part of the market entrance was blocked during the demolition, preventing customers and cargo vehicles from accessing the market premises.

Other vendors expressed concern about the security of their property, noting that some of the demolished structures had been serving as part of the perimeter barrier, preventing criminals from entering the market.

The traders have called on the Police to provide security at the market while investigations into the destruction continue. They also demanded that those responsible be compelled to restore the demolished structures to ensure safety and normal business operations.

In response, the Police yesterday evening forcefully reopened the main gate after traders threatened to stage a demonstration over its closure. However, during the process, officers reportedly discovered the body of an unidentified person at the scene.

The discovery caused panic among the vendors, some of whom speculated that the individuals behind the demolition could also be linked to the death. They noted that several homeless people often sleep in the market.

By press time, the body had reportedly been taken to the city mortuary for a postmortem examination.

Additional Reporting by Moses Kigongo

KCCA SPEAKS OUT

However, the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) said the matter is currently under investigation.

In an interview with *New Vision*, KCCA spokesperson Daniel NuweAbiline said the authority had tasked Police to investigate the circumstances surrounding the demolition.

"Our trust is now in Police, which is currently investigating the matter, but as of now, the situation is under control," he said.

Additionally, Sheilla Birungi, a KCCA official, visited the market following complaints that one of the entrances had been blocked by debris from the demolished structures.

"When I heard this important issue, we could not sit back as KCCA, that is why we had to engage your leaders and security to ensure this matter is sorted," Birungi said.

Earlier, KCCA had indicated that the demolition was carried out without a demolition permit.

"At approximately 10:00p.m. on Saturday night, unidentified individuals descended on a structure forming part of St Balikuddembe Market, located along Nakivubo Channel on Sebana Road, and demolished it without authorisation," KCCA said in an earlier statement.

The authority added that the demolition was carried out "in a reckless manner and in blatant disregard of the law".

"This reckless demolition, carried out under the cover of darkness, was done without obtaining a demolition permit

ARRESTS

Police confirmed that two people have been arrested in connection with the demolition.

Kampala Metropolitan Police spokesperson Racheal Kawala said investigations are ongoing regarding the Saturday events.

KCCA said operators of the two machines that were used during the demolition have since been arrested as investigations continue.

Under the law, destroying a building without legal justification may amount to malicious damage to property under the Penal Code Act.

Upon conviction, the offence can attract a prison sentence of up to five years, or a longer term, depending on the circumstances of the case.

from the city authority," the statement read.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

KCCA confirmed Ham's building plan along Nakivubo Channel from Kyaggwe Road to Entebbe Road, located in central division under application No. 2509136236 and building permit No. 3348/2025.

In a letter dated August 13, 2025, the Minister for Kampala Metropolitan Affairs, Minsa Kabanda, wrote to the KCCA executive director, instructing the authority to render Kiggundu all the necessary support towards the successful implementation of the development and beautification of Nakivubo drainage channel as directed by President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

In another letter dated September 9, 2025, the KCCA Physical Planning Committee approved Ham's proposed redevelopment



This demolition was done without obtaining a demolition permit from the city authority.

plan, application No. KCCA242500004692 for the Nakivubo channel.

According to KCCA physical planning director Vincent Byendaimira, Kiggundu was tasked with granting KCCA's technical team access to the site during the implementation process to monitor and supervise progress.

He was also required

to provide a storm water management plan, taking into account areas beyond the exit point at Entebbe Road.

However, the project has previously attracted criticism after heavy downpours that followed the developments, ravaged several properties within the vicinity, including sections of St Balikuddembe Market, resulting in the loss of more than 10 lives and property worth millions of shillings last year.

TRADERS SPEAK OUT

Suzan Kushaba, the former interim committee chairperson and one of the landlords in the market, expressed fear over what she described as "mafias" who demolished several structures, including traders' lock-ups, public toilets and stalls, without regard for the Government, which currently manages the market through KCCA.

"I apologise to all the stakeholders of St Balikuddembe Market, especially the traders, for asking them to entrust the Government with the management of their market. I did not know that mafias could grab their land from KCCA and do whatever they want with impunity," Kushaba said.

She further alleged that she had previously received information about plans by certain individuals, including some high-profile government officials, to take over the market land. However, Kushaba said she believed such attempts would fail because the Government would protect the