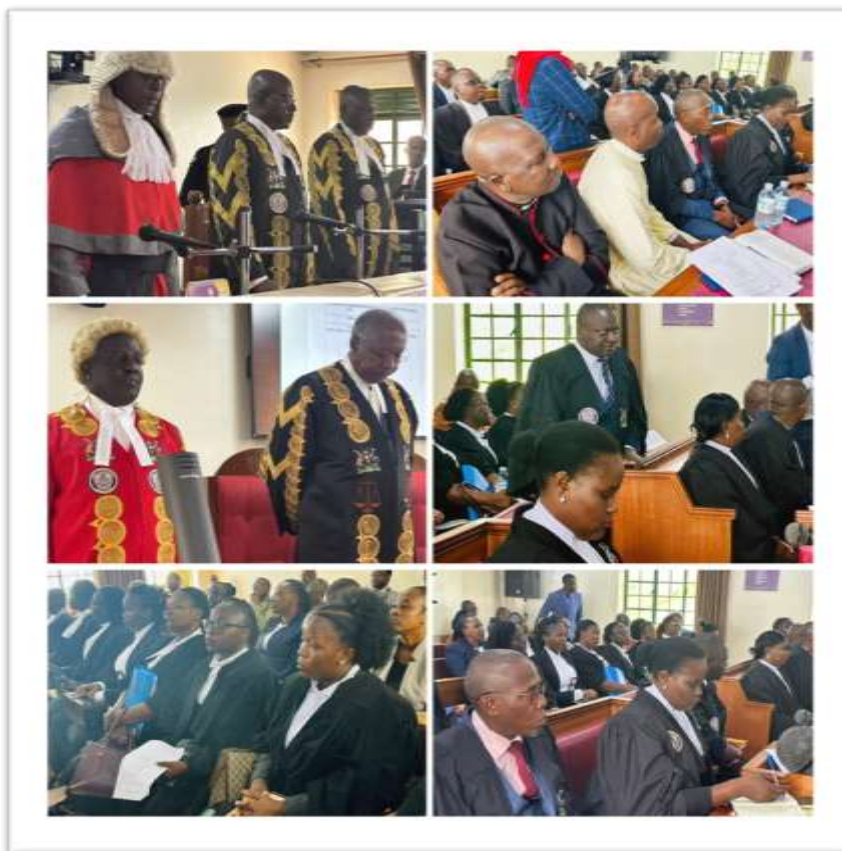


Deputy Chief Justice opens Court of Appeal Criminal Session in Kabale, reaffirms Judiciary's commitment to timely justice delivery

Earlier, the Deputy Chief Justice, Justice Dr. Flavian Zeija, officially opened a three-day Court of Appeal Criminal Appeals Session at Kabale High Court, where 30 criminal appeals are scheduled for hearing.

The session, which runs from 4th to 6th November 2025, is presided over by a panel of Justices comprising Justice Frederick Martin Stephen Egonda-Ntende, Justice Oscar John Kihika, and Justice Jesse Byaruhanga Rugyema.



According to the cause list issued by the Registrar, HW Rukundo Allen Owembabazi, the Court is handling 12 appeals of Murder, 10 of Aggravated Defilement, four of Aggravated Robbery, two of Kidnap with Intent to Murder, and one appeal each of Rape and Manslaughter. A State appeal is also listed in a case where an accused was acquitted of Aggravated Defilement.

In his remarks, Justice Dr. Zeija noted that this marks the third Court of Appeal criminal session in Kabale, describing it as a milestone

in improving access to justice. He said holding sessions outside Kampala eases the burden on litigants who would otherwise incur high travel costs to access the Court's services.

While acknowledging the challenge of case backlog, he attributed it to the Court's heavy workload and previously limited manpower. However, he expressed optimism following the recent appointment of additional Justices, which raised the number from 13 to 20, and anticipated a further rise to the statutory 35 Justices to enable operationalization of regional Court of Appeal Circuits.

He reaffirmed the Judiciary's resolve to deliver timely and efficient justice, noting that ICT adoption was helping address challenges such as missing records. "A dedicated taskforce is already tracking misplaced files," he said.

The Deputy Chief Justice urged collaboration among all stakeholders and assured that judgments arising from the session would be delivered within reasonable time. He further encouraged the increased use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), including mediation and plea bargaining, to complement formal adjudication.

Justice Karoli Lwanga Ssemogerere, Resident Judge, Kabale High Court Circuit, welcomed the appellate panel and lauded the circuit's ongoing efforts in reducing case backlog. He attributed this progress to effective inter-agency cooperation among the Office of the Attorney General, ODPP, Police, Prisons Service, and local government leaders.

He also praised the adoption of virtual testimony and the Prisons Service's logistical support, which have enhanced efficiency. Justice Ssemogerere cited progress in juvenile justice management through the Kabale Remand Home, and highlighted ongoing digitization efforts, including a court website for cause lists and judgments, voice recognition systems, and collaboration with the Ministry of Lands to expedite land-related cases.

Representing the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), Mr. Sam Oola commended the Judiciary for taking appellate sessions closer to the people, calling it “a vital innovation” in tackling backlog. He, however, appealed for increased staffing of prosecutors and timely notice of sessions to facilitate better case preparation.

On behalf of the Attorney General's Chambers, Ms. Betty Karungi Gasabusa applauded the Judiciary's people-centered approach and revealed plans by the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to open five new regional offices, including in Kabale and Masaka, to strengthen government legal representation.

Speaking on behalf of the Uganda Law Society, Ms. Rebecca Ayesiga hailed the Judiciary's consistency in conducting regional sessions, noting that they “restore public confidence and give litigants renewed hope.”

Mr. Hussein Mwanja, Probation and Welfare Officer at Kabale Remand Home, reported that the facility currently houses 47 juveniles, and appealed for faster disposal of children's cases to avoid prolonged detention.

The event drew wide participation from the justice sector, including representatives from the Uganda Prisons Service, Uganda Police Force, ODPP, and local and religious leaders.



Notably in attendance were HW Rukundo, HW Dr. Alex Mushabe Karocho (Private Legal Secretary to the Deputy Chief Justice), HW Julius Mwesigye (Personal Assistant to the Deputy Chief Justice), SSP Alex Wabwire (Regional Police Commander), and Mr. Sambya Festo (Regional Prisons Commander).

The session was moderated by HW Kenneth Tumwebaze, Assistant Registrar, Kabale.

Rose Ampurira