

Opposition aide tortured by Museveni's son as Uganda escalates repression ahead of 2026 elections

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The brutal abduction and torture of Eddie Mutwe—bodyguard of Ugandan opposition leader of the National Unity Platform (NUP), Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine—marks a new stage in the escalating repression by President Yoweri Museveni's regime ahead of the 2026 presidential elections.

Mutwe was held incommunicado by the president's son and military chief, General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who has since boasted of using him as a “punching bag”, laying bare the brutal character of the dictatorship that has ruled Uganda for the past four decades with the backing of the imperialist powers.

On April 27, 2025, Mutwe was seized in broad daylight near Kampala by armed men, reportedly from Uganda's military intelligence services. For days, his whereabouts remained unknown. Then, Muhoozi tweeted a photo of himself with the words, “I captured NUP's military commander like a grasshopper (Nsenene). If they keep on provoking us, we shall discipline them even more,” next to a photo of the Mutwe, shirtless with a shaved head.

Muhoozi then posted “he is in my basement learning Runyankole. You are next!” he added referring to opposition leader Bobi Wine, who he threatened to behead last January.

The tweet was laced with tribalist undertones. The Banyankole people of southwestern Uganda, one of roughly 50 ethnic groups in the country and comprising just 8 percent of the population, speak Runyankole, the language referenced by Muhoozi. Museveni and many of his closest military and political associates hail from this minority group. This exposes the hypocrisy behind Museveni's rhetoric of “anti-tribalism” and national unity. In reality, the regime has systematically weaponised ethnicity for decades to divide workers and peasants along tribal lines under the façade of national cohesion.

Mutwe was eventually dragged before a court on May 5, visibly bruised and barely able to stand. According to the Uganda Medical Association, he suffered internal injuries

consistent with prolonged beatings and electrocution. He reported being forced to kneel for hours, whipped, electrocuted, waterboarded and coerced into swearing allegiance to Museveni.

This public act of brutality is part of a broader, escalating campaign of state terror against the NUP and other opposition forces as Uganda approaches the 2026 elections. Earlier this month, the army raided the NUP's headquarters in Kampala. Wine has been repeatedly arrested since he began challenging Museveni for the presidency—first in 2021, then again in 2023 and 2024. On Friday, Wine announced to run again for the 2026 elections.

Kizza Besigye, leader of the Forum for Democratic Change and head of the official opposition in parliament, was abducted in Nairobi, forcibly transferred to Kampala, and has now spent nearly five months in detention on fabricated treason charges. The NUP reports that over 2,000 of its supporters have been abducted since 2021, with at least 18 still missing.

The targets of this campaign are not just bourgeois opposition leaders. It is the millions of workers, youth, and rural poor whose growing anger over poverty, inequality, and repression threatens the very foundations of Museveni's four-decade dictatorship.

Faced with this rising tide of popular discontent towards an increasingly frail 80-year-old Museveni, Muhoozi and his inner circle have escalated open violence, illegal detention, and unchecked military impunity to crush opposition and pave the way for a dynastic transfer of power. Lacking any genuine political base beyond the police, the military, and sections of the affluent middle class and business elite enriched by the regime, Muhoozi has sought to prove his brutality by personally taking the lead in the state's escalating repression.

Last year, Museveni promoted Muhoozi to full General and appointed him Chief of Defence Forces of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), in line with the military's

role in securing a dynastic transfer of power. A graduate of the US Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth—dubbed the “Intellectual Centre” of the US military—Muohozi maintains close ties to Washington. In February, he met with US Ambassador William Popp and Military Attaché Lt. Col. Christian Nouumba, praising the US-Uganda alliance. “Together, we have made significant progress... Let us reaffirm our shared commitment to peace, prosperity, and the well-being of our people,” he said.

Ambassador Popp, in turn, commended the regime's role as a proxy to US imperialism. For decades, imperialist powers have backed Museveni as a reliable stooge, working with him to deploy the UPDF across Great Lakes and Horn of Africa. Uganda's deployment of troops in Somalia, South Sudan and DR Congo, and its policing the flow of refugees and migrants, has earned it vast sums in military aid. The US alone has provided over \$1 billion in military assistance to Uganda over the last two decades, much of it through training programs that directly involve the military units responsible for internal repression.

While Museveni's personal wealth and that of his close associates is undisclosed, Uganda's richest 10 percent capture 35.7 percent of national income, while the poorest 10 percent receive just 2.5 percent. A small elite dominates key sectors such as real estate, banking and manufacturing, with tycoons like Sudhir Ruparelia (\$1.6 billion), Hamis Kiggundu (\$1.02 billion) and Drake Lubega (\$850 million) amassing enormous fortunes. Its elite are involved in staggering levels of state corruption, most infamously parliamentary speaker Anita Among pocketed nearly \$900,000 in non-existent travel allowances.

Wine, far from offering a genuine alternative to the Museveni regime, remains firmly embedded in the camp of pro-imperialist opposition politics. Though he rose to prominence as a rapper denouncing poverty and dictatorship and secured 3.5 million votes in the 2021 election despite mass repression, beyond vague populist appeals against corruption, youth unemployment and “freedom” the NUP advances little more than a rebranding of the elite that dominates the Ugandan state.

Wine is a millionaire, with an estimated net worth of \$12 million. His social base is largely in a frustrated upper middle class, whose aspirations to enrich themselves through business and state patronage have been blocked by Museveni's monopoly on power and exclusive access to imperialist backing. His party's programme, “A New Uganda,” pledges to stabilise the business climate and empower the private sector. It reads as a pitch to foreign investors and Ugandan entrepreneurs seeking “predictability” and “growth.”

Wine has repeatedly lobbied Washington and London to

impose targeted sanctions on Museveni's inner circle. In the recent interview with *The Guardian*, he lamented, “We have always been asking for targeted sanctions on those in the regime and asking the US not to send their taxpayers' money to be spent on things that can be used against our people.”

This is the plea of a man seeking a seat at the imperialist table. Wine does not oppose the domination of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, or multinational capital over Uganda's economy, nor the militarised role Uganda plays in regional proxy wars.

The escalating campaign of terror in Uganda is part of a broader wave of violence unleashed by a ruling elite across East Africa—From Museveni's preparations for dynastic succession in Uganda, to Ruto's deployment of police and military repression against anti-austerity protesters in Kenya, to renewed political persecution of the opposition CHADEMA party in Tanzania, and South Sudan's oil-soaked corrupt elites dragging the country back toward civil war.

The working class and oppressed masses face a shared reality of deepening poverty, unemployment, land dispossession, and repression. Yet their struggles remain fragmented, disoriented by bourgeois opposition figures who defend the capitalist system. The only way forward is the unification of workers, youth, and peasants across borders in a common fight for socialism.

This requires building a new revolutionary leadership, forged as part of the International Committee of the Fourth International, to link the struggle of the oppressed in East Africa with that of the international working class, in the fight to abolish capitalism and establish workers' power on a world scale.



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