

Makerere crisis: Student leaders of universities petition Parliament

By Steven Turyarugayo

Guild presidents from public universities under their umbrella body, have petitioned the Speaker of Parliament, to investigate the alleged human rights violations by security forces as they quelled the strike over fees increment at Makerere University, last week.

"Students have been subjected to inhumane treatment. They were brutalised and such amounts to torture, which is unlawful," Jonathan Tundulu, the Kyambogo guild president and head of the delegation, said.

While presenting their petition to Parliament on Monday, the 13-man delegation, with representation from all public universities, demanded that Parliament sets up a committee to look into the conduct of the soldiers.

Police and Military Police

BETWEEN THE LINES

■ Imran Ntambazi, the guild president of Gulu University, called for the halting of tuition increment, saying it was not feasible given the fact that these are public universities with government subsidies. He added that such an accumulative increment will automatically deprive many of the right to education.

have camped at the Makerere since students staged demonstrations that turned rowdy over the university's tuition fees policy of 15% cumulative increment.

"We, therefore, request the Speaker of Parliament to institute a committee to



Ntambazi and Tundulu, while delivering a petition at Parliament in Kampala, on Monday. Photo by Timothy Murungi

investigate this matter," Nelson Asiimwe, a student leader from Makerere, said.

The petition was received by Manjiya MP John Baptist Nambeshe, on behalf of Speaker Rebecca Kadaga, who

is abroad on official duty.

The petitioners further requested the withdrawal of the army from the university's premises, arguing that a university is meant to be a place with a conducive environment,

but said the campus was now like a battle ground.

The policy

The contentious fees increment policy came into force on July 1, last year at the recommendation

of the University Council, which the petitioners accuse of always turning a deaf ear to the students' concerns and pleas.

The student leaders said several letters were exchanged between the student leadership at Makerere and the university management, in the quest for a solution to the crisis, but they were always referred to the council, which had not been helpful.

"We last had a dialogue with the management of the university on September 30. The management said they were not involved in policy. We then wrote to the University Council, which has not responded" Asiimwe said.

Pamela Nyangoma, one of the 12 female student leaders from Makerere that were arrested during the fracas, asked Parliament to intervene in the case of the suspended students.