

US condemns Mak violence

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KAMPALA. The US embassy in Uganda has condemned the violence that security forces meted out on Makerere University students during the strike last Thursday and asked government to intervene.

"The US Mission in Uganda is increasingly concerned about the violence at Makerere University in response to ongoing protests against the proposed tuition increases. Footage of security services attacking unarmed students in their residence halls and attacks on journalists covering the protests are especially disturbing," the US statement reads.

"This heavy-handed response by security services is uncalled

for, and is a direct affront to the freedoms of assembly, speech and expression guaranteed by Uganda's constitution. We urge the Government of Uganda to allow all Ugandans to exercise their basic rights peacefully and without fear," the statement added.

Police reaction

Police spokesperson Fred Enanga defended the use of force by the joint security officers in searching students' halls of residence.

"Once a police commander makes a proclamation order during a riot for you to stop protesting, you are supposed to oblige," Mr Enanga said, adding that what happens later even if it involves death the officer cannot be held criminally

liable. However, the Police Act only allows use of force that is proportional to the resistance.

Mr Enanga said they received intelligence that there was a third force, which he did not name, behind the protesting students and they are investigating it.

He said most of the arrested students had withdrawn money sent by a person he did not mention and that they would pick it from the same mobile money agent at the university.

He said the same group had been inciting students from other universities such as Kyambogo and Makerere University Business School Nakawa to join the protests.

Additional reporting by Andrew Bagala