

# MAK strike: Roll call ordered

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Makerere University's management has instructed departments and colleges to conduct roll calls of all staff and indicate those who have not reported since the semester opened so that disciplinary action can be taken.

But the striking staff – both academic and administrative – have remained defiant, refusing to show up for duty and paralysing the operations at the university.

The university administration says although the institution opened officially on Saturday January 19, they received information that to date, some members of staff have not yet resumed their duties.

Andrew Abunyang, the director of human resource at the university, on Tuesday instructed all heads of department/units to conduct a headcount and submit a report to him on the same day.

The headcount, according to Abunyang's letter dated February 5, was intended to establish the members of staff who had not yet resumed their duties.

"All staff who will not have reported for duty by 8:00am on Wednesday February 6, will be considered to have absconded from duty and their case will be handled in accordance with the applicable laws and policies," the letter reads.

## Response to headcount

Responding to the headcount directive, the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), Makerere Administrative Staff Association (MASA) and National Union of Education Institutions (NUEI) issued a joint statement yesterday re-affirming their determination to continue with the strike.

The staff associations said laying down their tools was both constitutional and a legal right under Article 40 of the Constitution.

The letter, which was signed by all the association heads, copied to director human resource and the vice-chancellor, reiterated that the strike was still on and called on the members to remain calm and unintimidated.

"We are committed to using all the legal means available to defend the rights of our members," the associations said.



An almost empty lecture theatre at Makerere University yesterday. Photo by Miriam Namutebi

However, the striking staff leaders affirmed their commitment to dialogue within the three days that they gave ending today.

They added that once they receive a formal communication from management regarding their resolutions, they would immediately reconvene the joint general assembly in order to make the appropriate decisions.

The joint association statement was signed by Edward Mwavu (MUASA), Sarah Wegosasa (MASA) and Bruce Twesigye (NUEI).

In an interview with *New Vision*, Mwavu said the associations were open to dialogue, but added that they would not be intimidated.

"We are willing to talk, but the levelled ground is that suspended association heads must be reinstated, and then we will talk. We are ready for dialogue," he said.

Recently, Makerere University vice-chancellor Barnabas Nawangwe suspended the top leaders of three associations for allegedly inciting staff to strike among other different cases of indiscipline.

The affected were Dr Deus Kamunyu (MUASA), Bennet Magara and Joseph Kalema from MASA. This sparked off a strike that has been on for three weeks now.

■ In an effort to resolve the impasse, Nawangwe on Monday morning met the executive and the suspended leaders of the three associations through the mediation of the university's convocation chairperson, Dr Tanga Odoi. But the members of the associations refused to call off the strike while their leaders were still under suspension.

## EFFORTS

### Situation at university

*New Vision* journalists that visited the university yesterday observed heavy deployment of both the army and Police within and around the university.

Earlier in the day, a group of students staged a protest, which was quickly dispersed by security personnel.

A number of lecture rooms were either empty or had in them a handful of students chatting.

Some of the offices, especially at

the School of Agricultural Sciences, College of Natural Science and College of Humanities and Social Sciences remained locked. At these colleges, there wasn't a single lecture conducted between 10:00am and 2:00pm.

One first year student interviewed said they had in the morning attended their first lecture since the semester opened.

### Makerere responds

But Dr. Muhammad Kiggundu-Musoke, the acting manager communications and international relations at the university, said lectures were underway at several colleges.

However, he acknowledged that some lecturers were still on strike. He was optimistic that the issues will be resolved.

Kiggundu said that lectures were going on at the College of Health Sciences, College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology and the College of Computing and Information Sciences.

"There is scanty teaching at some colleges mainly because students have not turned up, but we appeal to the public to stay calm. By Monday we are optimistic that the situation will be normal," he added.