Media houses fail to popularise national anthem

By Walter Wafula

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Media owners and managers in Uganda have been asked to popularise the national anthem on a daily basis, as part of preparations to mark Uganda's golden jubilee independence anniversary on Tuesday, 9 October 2012.

Coat of arms of the Republic of Uganda

"As we celebrate 50 years of our independence, and look to the future, government is enjoining the media to popularise the national anthem (*Oh Uganda, Land of Beauty*) as a noble social responsibility contribution by the media, towards national awareness," reads a statement from Mary Karoro Okurut, the minister of Information and National Guidance, to the media houses.

"This is, therefore, to request that airing all the three stanzas of our national anthem be given prominence in your media house. This should be played at the beginning of every news bulletin," Okurut said last week.

However, by the end of last week, it was reported that none of the radio or television stations in the country had implemented the order.

In addition, the minister enjoined print media houses to give prominence to all the three stanzas through their publications. "This could be done through a daily or regular prominent appearance of all the three stanzas of our National Anthem in your publication," she said.

The minister addressed the orders to the proprietors, chief executive officers, managing editors and directors or the various media houses in the country. Copies of the letters are copied to the president, vice president and all ministers.

The orders came less than a week after NTV Uganda aired a story that showed how unpatriotic most Ugandans are by

looking at their inability to sing the national anthem. None of the four interviewees sampled in Kampala could sing the correct words of the anthem, although they knew the rhyme. Yet, the song is taught in most primary schools and is sung at all public gatherings with senior state officials. But just like other media houses, NTV had not responded to the government order.

Chapter Two, Article 8 of Uganda's constitution lists the National Anthem as one of the national symbols, besides the court of arms and national flag. As such, it's an obligation for all Ugandan citizens to learn and know how to sing, and observe the message in the song.

Oh Uganda, Land of Beauty was composed by nationalists George William Kakoma in the early 60s following a call for submissions of a song to be used as a national anthem. The composer died at 89 on 8 April 2012 in Kampala following a year of illness.

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

Walter Wafula is a seasoned journalist who has reported for the *Daily Monitor* newspaper in Kampala-Uganda. He is also a contributor on Bizcommunity.com website. Email Walter at wafwalt@yahoo.com and connect on LinkedIn.

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