

Minister calls for professionalism in reporting



By [Walter Wafula](#)

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Ugandan journalists and media houses have been urged to be more professional in reporting about current affairs in the country to avoid slander and misrepresentation of facts.

The call was made by James Baba, the minister of state for internal affairs yesterday, 12 March 2012, as he released an investigation report which exonerates the Uganda Police Force of the unproven shooting at Isaac Kasamani, a photojournalist at Monitor Publications Limited, earlier this year.

"It is increasingly clear that journalistic standards in this country need to see some great improvement. The media must be seen to be objective to its readers. They must report the news without fear or favor. Many people in the media are quick to claim they have reasons to fear, yet at the same time they seem all too willing to demonstrate favor," the minister said at a press conference in Kampala.

The claims made...

"They seem unwilling to scrutinize claims made against the government and agencies like the police or even to make clear that an allegation is under investigation and should not be reported as fact in the absence of corroborative evidence."

The minister made the statements in reference to reports that followed Kasamani's narrative in the *Daily Monitor* issue of 25 January this year, about how he narrowly escaped a gun shot at a rally in January. The claim was later reported by several local and international media channels.

But key findings of an "independent" investigation into the claim, released by the minister yesterday indicate that the witness with the best vantage point from which to observe the proceedings at the scene, states that at the time at which Kasamani claims to have been shot at; a canister was thrown out of the vehicle.

"Despite interviews with a number of people who were on the scene, no other witness reports a shot as having been fired at Mr Kasamani. Mr Kasamani himself does not claim to have seen a gun fired at him. Rather he speaks of sparks," William Redmond, the investigator says in his report.

According to reports

In his narrative, the photojournalist reported that police officers moving in a police van shot at him. To the contrary, Redmond, the investigator concludes that the 64mm gas/smoke canister which was used by the police at the scene, "emits

a sharp noise which sounds like a shot and as it explodes...sparks are emitted".

Redmond was a distinguished senior member of the Irish national police force, An Garda Siochana and served as commander of United Nations Police in Cyprus.

Commenting on the finding, Baba said, "It is clear on any reasonable assessment of the facts that no shot was fired by police at Mr Isaac Kasamani. I must assume Mr Kasamani was mistaken."

But the same report adds that an examination of the firm arms by Robinah Kirinya, the senior government analyst in charge of ballistics, detected gunshot residue due in the barrels of the used fire arm, according to the *Daily Monitor* newspaper. However, the investigator said, "It isn't possible to state with scientific accuracy when they had last discharged ammunition before being submitted to the laboratory," the newspaper reported.

The minister accused journalists who reported Kasamani's allegations as fact of demonstrating "poor judgment." He also noted that editors who printed unsubstantiated allegations without even remotely suggesting that they were unsubstantiated and disputed did a disservice to not only their audiences but also to the practice and honor of journalism.

ABOUT WALTER WAFULA

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