

# A detailed account of the 1979 massacre of Muslims in western Uganda

INVESTIGATION

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Students of Bilal Islamic Institute (Kakiri) at a graduation ceremony in 2011 (PHOTO BY ABU SEMATIMBA)



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**Summary:** *Genocide* is internationally defined as actions intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such. In Ankole the bloodbath targeted Muslims as such. The perpetrators said they acted on the orders of the then defence minister and current president, Yoweri K. Museveni.

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It is now (1990) coming to eleven years since the end of the war that ousted Idi Amin from the presidency of Uganda. Some people choose to identify this war by the gigantic name of “LIBERATION WAR”; but as the experience we are about to review will show, absurd is a weak description of the colorful naming of this shootout whose major highlights was the convictimisation of the innocent.

When the Human Rights Commission was setup in 1987, it tried to sidetrack the issue by hearing evidence on everything else except the massacre of over 60 Muslims. If Jumba Masagazi had not exploded it, may be up to now the atrocious crime would never have been among the concerns of the Commission.

And when they addressed themselves to the matter, they payed lip service to it because they soon jumped off it without hearing what the major witnesses had to say. Instead they decided to emphasize the killing of two Muslims at a mosque in Kajara (Ntungamo District). They propelled the name of Sheikh Obeid Kamulegeya to prominence in association with the death of these Muslims and sought to imply that when Muslims die, it is a Muslim affair. In this they were helped by the country’s largely anti-Muslim press.

Neither were the authorities at the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) very keen on the issue; they wanted to forget anything that might put them in disfavor with the NRM government which some of them continually worship. When the *Vicegerent* newspaper highlighted the issue, a number of them were heard complaining, “These young boys want to bring us problems.”

And in another development one of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council officials told the present writer face to face, “We have more important issues to deal with.”

At that rate, the issue that involved the murder of so many Ugandans was steadily degenerating in a stale and misreported history. Two organizations refused to forget the issue; they were the *Vicegerent* and the Makerere University Muslim Students Association (MUMSA). We insisted that if we do not cause this issue to be redressed, then we shall soon be worthless. Our grand children would register that when Muslims are killed, it is not an issue. So we decided to visit Bushenyi with two aims.

First to reassure the Muslims there that they were not alone in their pain – we were with them. Secondly, to collect first-hand information from the survivors of the holocaust so that we may confront those who wish to forget it with the real facts.

We are therefore not merely interested in ranking up unpleasant history that might destabilize peace. But we believe that the danger lies more in forgetting than remembering, if the peace we seek is to be permanent.

## **Two trips**

We made two trips to the scene of the 1979 holocaust. The first one that took place in September 1988 was composed of the following:

1. Abasi Kiyimba
2. Imam Idi Kasozi
3. Idris Semakula

The second trip took place in February 1989, and the team was composed of the following:

1. Abasi Kiyimba
2. Hassan Mwesige
3. Musa Tonda
4. Ali Konge Kyeyune
5. Ali Mwesigwa

We used the MUMSA van Reg. No. UXF 739, and the driver on both occasions was Ali Mukibi.

## **The first trip**

The first trip was mainly a familiarization tour. It introduced us to the people of both Mbarara and Itendero. We enjoyed the hospitality of the chairman of the Muslim Community of the area, Br. Abdul-Mutwalib. We were able on this occasion to collect the general story and sequence of events from the eye-witnesses. We also met among other venerable personalities, Sheikh Abdulmanafi Semakula, Bashir Semakula Serujuge and others.

We also passed through Kyazanga in Masaka District where we met survivors who fled Itendero in the wake of renewed hostilities against them. In particular we were welcomed and given first-hand briefing by Hairat Nambi Segululigamba, a Muslim woman mobiliser in the area and daughter of the great Muslim pioneer in Itendero, Hajji Abdallah Segululigamba, who was among the first victims of the massacre.

## **The general story**

The Parish (Muluka) of Itendero is found in Bushenyi District. Islam has been a resident quality of the culture of the people in this part of the world since the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. For all the past years, Muslims and Christians are known to have coexisted peacefully.

During President Amin's time some of the Christians started getting discontented by the fact that the head of state was a Muslim. They nursed their grudge and threatened that if there was a change, the Muslim would "see" them. The trouble that culminated in the murder of more than 60 Muslims started long before the fall of Kampala on 11, April 1979.

## **March 1979**

By March 1979, the town of Mbarara had fallen into the hands of the Tanzanian invading forces, giving some people the room to harass Muslims without a defender. The first incident was that in which four Muslim lives were ended in cold-blood. In the village of Mbagwa in Kiziba sub-parish, a hostile group of Protestants attacked and killed the following Muslims:

1. Idi Tamukedde
2. Mansur Mutebi (son of Idi Tamukedde)
3. Mustapha Mabuye

#### 4. Abdallah Kyegombe

They were all killed in the house of Idi Tamuzadde, and the Christians kept guard over it to ensure that they were not buried. For two months they remained unburied. They were eventually laid to rest in May 1979 after the bold intervention of the then Chief Qadhi, Sheikh Kassim Mulumba. It will be recalled that during this period, the President was Yusuf Lule, a man who had converted from Islam to be admitted to a Christian school, and therefore probably saw little value in Muslim life. He turned a deaf ear to the outcry of the Muslim community.

When on 23, May 1979, Sheikh Kassim Mulumba proclaimed over the radio that the "liberation" meant nothing to the Muslims, President Lule was irritated. He is quoted as saying in response, that the reports of the massacre were extremely exaggerated. The killers not only went free, but were encouraged by the lack of government intervention, to kill again, and again, and again.

#### **April 1979**

This was the month in which the government of Idi Amin fell in Kampala. The harassment of the Muslims intensified to nearly the entire district of Ankole. Kagango sub-county was the worst hit. Here Muslims lived in constant fear, under intensive harassment.

More than 400 Muslims were detained without any charges – being Muslim was their only crime. They were forced to ransom themselves by paying dearly in form of money, cows, goats, sheep, bicycles, radios, etc. That of their property which their tormentors could not take was destroyed. For example, houses and plantations were burnt and cut down, respectively. A number of Muslims were forced to drink alcohol while others died resisting it. In this month of April, five prominent Muslims were murdered, including:

- Hajj Abasi Kayemba (former county chief Igara)
- Ismail Mutangizi (former senior internal auditor, Ankole District)
- Haj Amiisi Kapalaga (former county Imam, Bunyaruguru)
- Hajj Hassan Sewanyina (former sub-county Chief Isingiro)

These were killed on different days, and apparently according to an organized plan. All this time no restraining voice from the government was heard; the forces of oppression seemed to find justification and approval in this silence, and may be were not mistaken.

#### **May 1979**

Encouraged by the total helplessness of the Muslims, the Christians intensified their harassment in the following ways:

- Burning down of houses
- Slashing all banana plantations
- Looting of the property belonging to Muslims
- Taking over their land and turning it into grazing ground
- Burning down mosques

The burning down of mosques was a fresh development conceived in May as part of the grand idea of completely exterminating Islam from the area. Among the mosques burnt down in the county of Sheema were:

1. Kashekuro, 2. Kiyungu, 3. Kasana, 4. Kyengando, 5. Marembo,
6. Nyakanyinya, 7. Kyamata, 8. Kihunda, 9. Kyamushakara

These were the mosques destroyed only in one county of Sheema; otherwise in the whole of Ankole District, a total of 27 Mosques were torched.

Under the intensified house-burning campaign of May, the following lost their houses:

1. Bashir Semakula (Kiziba Parish)
2. Abbas Mugoli (Kiziba Parish)
3. Abdallah Katende (Kiziba Parish)
4. Dauda Serujunge (Kiziba Parish)
5. Hamad Katende (Kiziba Parish)
6. Hassan Hamutambo (Kiziba Parish)
7. Abbas Nsambu (Kiziba Parish)
8. Dauda Serunjogi (Kiziba Parish)
9. Ausi Semwogerere (Kiziba Parish)
10. Abdu Ishngabashiaja (Kiziba Parish)
11. Mutwalibu Turyatunga (Kiziba Parish)
12. Idi Tamukedde (Kiziba Parish)
13. Abdallah Segululigamba (Rwabutura Paish)
14. Jafar Kibirige (Rwabutura Paish)
15. Sulaiman Kapere (Rwabutura Paish)
16. Hiziri Byandala (Rwabutura Paish)
17. Rajab Kibadula (Rwabutura Paish)
18. Abduswamad Ntate (Kinyungu Parish)
19. Habib Maloge (Kinyungu Parish)
20. Imam Zikusooka (Kinyungu Parish)
21. Ishaka Magezi (Kinyungu Parish)
22. Ahmadda Mawanda (Kinyungu Parish)
23. Elias Mugerwa (Kinyungu Parish)
24. Abdu Murema (Kinyungu Parish)
25. Zaid Muwanga (Kinyungu Parish)
26. Umar Mutono (Rwengando Parish)
27. Haruna Musajjaakawa (Nyakabira Parish)
28. Noor Mulefu (Nyakabira Parish)

29. Abdunoor Mulele (Nyakabira Parish)
30. Abdunoor Sebalu (Nyakabira Parish)
31. Abubakar Kadala (Nyakabira Parish)
32. Ismail Balindekawa (Nyakabira Parish)
33. Anat Nankya (Nyakabira Parish)
34. Hajjat Hadijah Kalijja (Nyakabira Parish)
35. Hajji Byekwaso (Ishaka Parish)
36. Idi Bintubizibu (Kigarama Parish)
37. Musa Mwebe (Kigarama Parish)
38. Abdu Katarikaawe (Kigarama Parish)
39. Kasim Barukayo (Kigarama Parish)
40. Musa Rwabihuro (Kagango Parish)
41. Muhammad Mbidde (Kagango Parish)
42. Abbas Toronwa (Kagango Parish)
43. Sulaiman Sengahaki (Kagango Parish)
44. Ahmada Kasozi (Kagango Parish)
45. Hajji Kasule (Kagango Parish)

A number of Muslims whose houses were set on fire, like Abdallah Segululigamba, Idi Tamukedde, Abdunoor Mulele, etc, were also murdered earlier or later. Others only survived by running away in time. Other houses belonging to Muslims were burnt down in other parts of Ankole e.g. in Kijara and Mbarara town.

### **June 1979**

The month of June marked the climax of the atrocities committed against the Muslims of the area. By this time Lule's government had been in power for two months. Nothing had been done to the offenders, so the same crime could be committed again with impunity.

The bloodbath was fuelled by people like Edward Rurangaranga who addressed meetings in the area, in which he would make it clear that the people he was addressing were in two categories: Amin's men and rest. The old Sheikh Abdulmanaf quotes Rurangaranga as saying to the non-Muslim members at the gathering thus, "We have finished the stem (Amin); the branches (Muslims) are yours."

The Protestants got more hostile and started harassing Muslims verbally. They told them they would get them, sooner or later. A plan was hatched and all the non-Muslims were alerted. Some of them were not in favor of the proposed action, so they leaked the information to their Muslim friends. But most non-Muslims agreed to the plan, and they waited for an opportunity to implement it.

The spark came on 25, June 1979. Fenekansi Kamisha, a Christian, was murdered in his house by assailants that have not been identified up to now. The Christians accused the Muslims of the murder, and proceeded to execute "justice". Kamisha was one of the people that had led teams of Christians to harass Muslims and collect ransom from them.

On the morning of 26, June 1979, a mob of Christians armed with spears, knives and ropes, rounded up Muslims and tied their hands behind their backs. They said that they were doing it on the orders of Yoweri Museveni, the then minister of defense. They were led by Bankutaha, and included Machote, Buchuku, Yoram, Kamugish, Rweizire, Rwanuma, Kategaya, Nyamugurusi, Eridadi and others.

They gathered the Muslims in the home of Abdallah Segululigamba from where they marched them to River Rwizi for execution one after the other. At the river Muslims were butchered in the most horrifying manner. There was one whose head was cut into three pieces before being finally thrown into the river. Other cases included those whose hands or legs were cut off, then thrown into the river to drown.

The imam Abdallah Segululigamba was mercilessly hacked in the middle with a panga and thrown into the river. The most memorable of these cases of cruelty is the 27-year-old Madiya Natende who was seven months pregnant. Her stomach was ripped open with a machete and the fetus crudely torn out. Needless to add that she died soon after. Madiya's mother watched all this, and she would retell it to the end of her earthly days. She herself survived as if by a miracle – she jumped into the water before being cut.

We shall never learn the full story of the manner of the death and the nature of the suffering that the dead people went through because it could only be told by them. The following were the people who were killed at River Rwizi in June 1979.

#### **Adult males**

1. Abdallah Segluligamba
2. Abubaker Katongole
3. Abdu Ishangabashaija
4. Nashir Semwogerere
5. Ismail Sempa
6. Bruhane Sentende
7. Idris Serujunge
8. Umar Nsamba
9. Hussein Serunjogi

#### **Adult females**

1. Hayrat Namakula
2. Hadija Namayanja
3. Aisha Kasule
4. Hadija Mukibi
5. Sania Nalubega
6. HaliimaNabatanzi
7. Hadija Nanteza
8. Zuhra Namakula
9. Naira Nabunya

10. Mariam Tibanagwa
11. Bint Juma Nakayenga
12. Mastula Nakato
13. Layusa Bakazibaguma
14. Nafsi Nabatanzi
15. Nuliat Mbabazi
16. Aisha Nalongo
17. Zaituna Namakula
18. Zaina Namakula
19. Aidat Kenyana
20. Amana Nantande
21. Nuliat Kaweesa
22. Hadija Kayinda

**Children**

1. Nuliat Namakula
2. Abdu Katende
3. Madina Nabukalu
4. Luuba Namakula
5. Zainab Nakayinda
6. Aisha Nantende
7. Madia Namakula
8. Taha Habyalimana
9. Mariam Nabukalu
10. Madina Nakawesa
11. Hamida Nansamba
12. Naziru Nsamba
13. Muzida Nsamba
14. Ibrahim Kabuye
15. Zinab Nabunya
16. Rehemata Nakachwa

17. Luub Magala
18. Muzaphar Kabuye
19. Ismail Kato
20. Khamiyat Nabukalu
21. Hadija Nassaka
22. Haliima Nbatanzi
23. Bitijuma Nakayanja

It cannot be proclaimed that these atrocities in anyway took a form of political struggle. It was pure murder because some of the people killed were very old men and women and others were children and babies. Abubaker Katongole was 80 years, Seguliligamba was 75, Haliima Nbatanzi was 80, Aisha Katende was 85, Nuliat Namakula was 2, Hamida Nansamba was 18 months. Most of the children were below 5 years.

It should also be noted that the list here includes only those people from one county, and not all of them were recorded. The names of the rest of the people who died throughout Ankole District are not available to us. In addition, it was not even possible to recover all the bodies of the people known to have died.

For instance, of the 64 people we have recorded here, only 36 bodies were recovered from the water in which they were thrown. They were buried at a time of fear and distress, with intimidation being carried out by soldiers (the purported liberators) and other government officials whose duty should be to protect all citizens. It was not possible to bury them in their homes as this was "a danger zone"; so they were buried in mass graves at Nyamitanga mosque in Mbarara. The survivors fled the area and went to settle in Kyazanga in Masaka District, leaving their land to be occupied by their tormentors.

### **1980-85**

This was the time that has come to be referred to as the Obote II Regime. People like Edward Ruranganga who had allegedly directed the killing of Muslims assumed offices of responsibility in this government.

For those Muslims who chose to stay in Bushenyi, harassment continued, taking the form of psychological harassment, intimidation, denial of participation in public affairs, etc. Muslim-founded primary schools were abandoned, mosques neglected and orphans went without education, food, and dress. The leaders of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council were busy quarrelling among themselves and seeking the support of non-Muslims in their factional struggles. For all practical purposes, the world seemed to have forgotten these unfortunate people.

The events of 1979 were not even history, because history is recorded. The question that tormented those of us who bothered to think about them was: Is it possible to forget these people and rest with a free conscience? The answer is no. It was necessary for us not just to record the general story, but get the minute details – that is why it was necessary to make a second trip.

### **The second trip**

By the time we made the second trip, we had managed to publicize the plight of these unfortunate people, and obtained some financial assistance for them from the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), which we delivered. We first made a stopover at Kyazanga where we were taken around Kakuuto Primary School by its proprietor, Sheikh Mbajja. This is a school for Muslim orphans.

It has a total of 15 orphans and out of these, 96 are children of the victims of the 1979 holocaust. They study free of charge but they are completely helpless when it comes to scholastic materials and clothes. They also do not have any form of bedding. WAMY made some contributions towards their clothing, but it was meager compared to the need.

The following day we continued to Itendero. After performing the Juma prayers we talked to the Muslims and gave them words of solidarity. Among other points we encouraged and thanked them for insisting on upholding the banner of Islam in the area in



spite of the wishes of their enemies. We were impressed to find that a new mosque had been erected at the site and would soon be ready for prayers.

We met the headmaster of Itendero Primary School, Mr. Ismail Senyonga and discussed general issues relating to the orphans. We were given a list of 44 orphans in the school. Of these, 16 were completely helpless and could not afford school fees and scholastic materials. The delegation cleared all their fees for the year 1989 and made some contribution towards the scholastic needs of some of them.

The following morning, we proceeded to Kiziba Parish. Our mission there was twofold – to talk to the survivors of the massacre and get their detailed personal testimonies, and to offer some financial relief to the orphans in distress. We paid the fees for 32 orphans at Kiziba Primary School and for five students in secondary schools. We then proceeded to talk to the survivors of the massacre.

In all, we were able to talk to 20 survivors. A part from Mzee Hassan Hamutambo (81) whom we had met earlier at Itendero, we met the rest of the household of Sheikh Abdulmanaf Semakula. Each narrated to us a peculiar experience involving their personal survival, but their stories corroborated the general story already given. The people interviewed included:

- Hassan Hamutambo; an old man aged 81 who lost his 34-year-old son, and himself survived narrowly.
- Abdulmanaf Semakula; the Deputy District Qadhi of Mbarara. He is the oldest man in the area. He refused to leave because, he says if he left, all other Muslims would leave and then the Word of Allah would be wiped out in the area.
- Twalib Kasule; an elderly gentleman that suffered greatly during the massacre.
- Bashir Semakula Serujunge; a young man in his early 30s who jumped into the river before being hacked and swam to safety. He is credited with removing many of the dead bodies from the water and helping to prepare their burial.
- Yudaya Baryanengwe; an old lady in her 60s. She was cut three times by Buchunku and then thrown into the water. She survived miraculously, through the intervention of non-Muslims who found her floating but had no knowledge of how she had come to be there.

Other survivors included Asia Kishiki, Mayi Nabukalu, Habib Rutwinda, Mastula Segululigamba, Ishaq Magezi, Jalia Semwogerere, Hamid Semakula, Mrs. Kayinda, Mrs. Muzamiru Kangave, Abdu Hakim Luyima, Kinani Mutyaba, Abasi Sebadda, Fati Nanyonga, Sulaiman Semakula, Hairat Nambi, Yunus Tumwenda, Abdallah Katende, Sulaituna Nanyonga and others. (Some of these were interviewed in Kyazanga where they now live after fleeing their homes. The full texts of their personal testimonies are available in both the MUMSA and *Vicegerent* offices).

Of particular interest in these testimonies is the fact that these people know exactly who killed who as some of them were witnessing when their friends, parents, children, wives and husbands were butchered. Herein we present the list of the people that killed 37 of the victims and inflicted injuries on two of those that miraculously survived.

<b>VICTIM</b>	<b>ALLEGED KILLER</b>	<b>CURRENT (1990) STATE OF THE ALLEGED KILLER</b>
Bumbakali Katongole	Byarutsya	In Prison, Kyamugolanyi
Mwajjuma Nakyaja		In Prison,

	Byarutsya	Kyamugolanyi
Burhane Sentende	Byarutsya	In Prison
Naziiru Nsamba	Byarutsya	In Prison, Kyamugolanyi
Nuliat Mbabazi Buchunku	Buchunku	In Prison
Hariat Namakula	Buchunku	In Prison
Nuliat Kyokusaba	Buchunku	In Prison, Kyamugolanyi
Zaituni Namakula	Buchunku	In Prison
Rehma Nakachwa	Buchunku	In Prison, Kyamugolanyi
Abdallah Seguliligamba Machote	Machote	In Prison
Hadijah Nasaka	Machote	Prison

Kalijja Nanteza	Machote	Prison
Madiya Nantende	Machote	Prison
14 Saniya Nalubega	Kamugisha	Prison
Nashir Semwogerere	Ndeezi	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Umar Nsamba	Ndeezi	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Asiati Nantende	Ndeezi	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Afusa Nabatanzi	Mugenyi	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Abbasi Mugisha	Mugenyi	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Haliima Kinaana	Mugenyi	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Mariam Nabukalu	Rweizire	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Muzinda Nsamba	Rweizire	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Aramanzane Serunjogi	Rweizire	Free at home, Nyakachembe
Idris Serunjogi	Ruboha	Free at Home, Bunyangabo

Masitulla Nakato	Ruboha	Free at Home, Bunyangabo
Muzapharu Kabuye	Ruboha	Free
Layusa Bakazibaguma	Ruboha	Free
Aidat Kenyana	Rufigi	Free at Home, Kihunda
Abbas Kayinda	Rufigi	Free
Ismail sempa	Rufigi	Free
Hadija Nakayinda	Rufigi	Free
Ibrahim Kabuye	Rufigi	Free
Abdu Ishangabashaija	Rusasana	At home, Rwengando
Aisha Kalule Kyanyabanda	Rutagasa	Free
Kamiida Nansamba	Matayo	Free at home, Nyakaoemba
Zuula Namakula	Tom Mayanja	Free at home, Byanyagonga

Tibanagwa

Kakyanga

Free at homa, Kihunda

Mariam Nakitende and Yudaya Baryanengwe were brutally hacked by Nsangeki and Buchunku, respectively. Nsangeki died but Buchunku is still alive. The actual killers of the other victims are not specifically known; but it is known that in addition to the above list of murderers, Mwesigye and Renshana are known to have participated in the killing.

The other information that the people of Kiziba hold as sacred were names of the people who still occupy the land they snatched from them 11 years ago in spite of the claim that a sane government had returned to Uganda.

Below is a list of the owners of pieces of land that are still illegally occupied:

<b>LAND OWNER</b>	<b>ILLEGAL OCCUPANT</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
Hajj M Serunjogi	Nsangeki's family	Nyakacemba
Dauda Serunjogi	Muheirwe	Nyakacemba
Hajat A. Nakayenga	Kashaija A	Nyakacemba
Kasule Kapere	Gibamanya	Nyakacemba
Mustapha Ddungu	Bachondooza	Nyakacemba
Zamuda Nabukalu	Ruhema T	Nyakacemba

Hajj K. Katende	Bakweta E	Kiziba
A. Mugooli	Mwesigye	Kiziba
A. Mugooli	Kishakiizi	Kiziba
Hajj A Katende	Rutendana P	Bunyagonga
A Katamba	Nkwitsi	Rwengamdo

The Muslims of the area are aware that the Banyarwanda whose pieces of land were taken away during the Obote II Regime were returned to them when the NRM government came to power. But theirs which were taken six years earlier have not.

They are also grieved by the fact that the known alleged murderers of their people, 13 of whom appear in the list above, were free and even assumed leadership under the Resistance Council, or RC system. They have also heard that some senior ranking officials in the NRM government are involved in attempts to free the four jailed killers.

### **The Human Rights Commission**

The NRM government set up the Human Rights Commission; we thought this was a step in the right direction as it meant that the criminals of the past were to be brought to justice. But we are dissatisfied with this Commission for several reasons:

- There is no Muslim representation. It is not possible that matters of Muslim interest can be adequately handled without anyone to speak up for them with some feeling that arises out of belonging.
- The Commission did not allocate enough time to listen to witnesses on the 1979 Muslim holocaust. They have given three times as much time to listening to witnesses on Ben Kiwanuka's death than they have to that of over 64 Ugandans.
- They have attempted to divert the attention of the public from the killing of 64 Muslims by Christians to the death of two Muslims in Kajara by the Uganda Police supposedly at the instruction of Sheikh Abdul-Obeid Kamulegeya, a prominent Muslim.
- President Yoweri Museveni was implicated by the testimonies. We are not satisfied that he chose to give his evidence in a closed session whereas this is an issue of interest to all Ugandans of good conscience.
- Witnesses like Edward Rurangaranga whom even the president himself implicated as responsible for directing the murderers, has not been summoned to appear before the Commission.

- Alleged Murderers who have been unequivocally named to the Commission still walk free. This continues to be an embarrassment to the Commission and to the government.

### **What do we want?**

A senior NRM official has made an irritating comment in reference to those who blame the government for not bringing the 1979 killers to justice when he said, "We can not bring them back to life, can we?"

Of course he is right, they cannot be brought back to life, and we are aware of this. So what do we want? We are not irresponsible agitators seeking to reopen wounds of the past that are better forgotten. We are patriots who would like our country to start again on a road of meaningful peace.

As President Yoweri Museveni himself has said more than once, you cannot have peace without justice. We want justice. We would like all the alleged murderers to be apprehended and put on trial. We have been to the area and talked to the people. All the orphans know who killed their parents. They talk of revenge twice a day, and constantly await their chance. If we satisfy them that there is a more civilized way of getting justice done, we might be able to avert another crisis in the area.

Otherwise, we do not see the atmosphere clearing. The longer justice is delayed, the closer we come to detonating the time bomb. For this reason, the murder of over 64 Muslims in Bushenyi cannot become history. It is still a live issue that will affect the destiny of this nation, whether we like or not.

### **Personal testimonies of the survivors**

The following are the personal testimonies of the Muslims who survived the massacres.

#### **Mzee Hassan Hamutambo**

Mzee Hassan Hamutambo was born in 1908 in Kigezi District. In 1925 he migrated with his parents to Rwengando in Kiziba sub-county, Ankole District. He fought in the Second World War and returned to the same place in 1946. His father was not a Muslim and was married to 10 wives. In 1946 Hassan Hamutambo embraced Islam. He later married a non-Muslim lady, and in 1975 the community pressurized him to revert to Christianity. He refused.

From then his wife started misbehaving, and they divorced. Asked about how Muslims behaved during Amin's regime, Mzee Hassan said, "Generally the Muslims behaved well, save for two men, one of whom is currently in jail. It was mainly the Christians who held high positions of responsibility. For example all the chiefs, save for the then Gombolola chief, Abas Kigozi, were Christians."

On how the massacres started, Mzee Hassan said that it all started with the Christians holding continuous meetings. Thereafter they went to Muslim homes and demanded cows as ransom for having misbehaved during Amin's regime. Among the people whose cows were eaten are Jafari Kibirige, Miiro, Hajji Katende, Serunjogi and Hamidi. Banana plantations belonging to the Muslims were destroyed. All these events took place in 1979.

Then they started gathering the Muslims from their places of work or homes at around lunch time. They were called out of their homes by people with spears, dogs and banana fibers who told them that they were wanted by the defence minister, Yoweri Museveni, to explain certain things. On coming out of their houses, they were handcuffed with banana fibres and led to River Rwizi where they were cut with pangas and thrown into the water.

Mzee Hassan said he lost his eldest son Abdu Isangabashaija who left three sons, of whom two are currently (1989) in Primary Four and one in Primary Two.

Another one is the son of Abdulmanaf who was his in-law. His worst experience of all was that of the lady who had been married to Ali – Madiya – who was seven months pregnant. Her belly was hacked with a panga and fetus removed and thrown in the river.

Abdallah Segululigamba, the Muslim pioneer in the area, was also killed. The Mzee also said that before all this took place, there were some four people who were killed in the house

and the Muslims were prevented from burying them. They were not buried until a delegation from the headquarters of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council headed by Kassim Mulumba came to the place. The victims were:

1. Idi Tamukedde
2. Abdallah Kyegambe
3. Mustapha Mabuye
4. Out of his memory

All of them were neighbors. Only their skeletons could be buried. "We placed two in each grave", said Mzee Hassan.

Asked about how he escaped, he said, "I cannot exactly tell how I escaped. It was a horrible experience, but somehow I managed to escape to Zaire where I stayed for sometime in Muslim homes. In the same year I came back because of my people I had left behind, but I found when they had gone to Mbarara."

On property, the old man said he had lost almost everything. His house was also burnt. "As if that was not enough, in 1982 during the Obote II Regime, when they started chasing the Banyarwanda, my house was burnt alleging that I was a Nyarwanda. I later went to Mbarara and cleared myself by producing evidence."

When Tito Okello Lutwa took over power in 1985, they again came to his place at around 4.30pm and burnt everything within the grass-thatched house. In it were 30 bags of coffee, 30 bags of maize, 4 bags of beans, 4 bags of groundnuts 3 granaries of millet. They alleged that his son Mutwalib Dimba had on many occasions stolen money and a radio cassette, and they wanted him to give testimony to the police. "However, some of the people who did it were arrested," Mzee Hassan said.

As regards responsibility, the old man said that he has 10 children in Primary school, three of whom are orphans. He has three in Secondary school. Asked whether he knew about any other orphans, he said he did not know many, except those of Abdallah Kachwa. People had dispersed into different places after the tragedy, he noted sadly. He, however, said that some are under the guardianship of Sheikh Abdulmanaf Semakula at Kiziba, who "lost many children, about 10 and his wife was cut on the head but still lives."

### **Ibrahim Kangave**

He stays in Kiziba Village. He asserted that the people killed in 1979 were not politicians. Ibrahim explains that soon after the meetings held by non-Muslims, especially the Protestants in Itendero, and after forcing M