



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Martha Karua Raises Alarm Over Dr. Kizza Besigye's Deteriorating Health Amid Trial Delays

**KAMPALA, UGANDA – February 24, 2026:** Senior Counsel Martha Karua today appeared before Justice Dr. Emmanuel Baguma in Uganda's High Court as part of the legal defense team for veteran opposition leader Dr. Kizza Besigye.

This latest court appearance comes 465 days after his apprehension in Nairobi and forced return to Uganda, where Dr. Besigye now faces charges of treason and misprision of treason, offenses carrying a maximum penalty of death.

While the matter was scheduled for a critical pre-trial conference today, proceedings stalled after the prosecution informed the court that they had yet to complete full disclosure of the evidence and materials they intend to rely on. This failure significantly hindered the defense's ability to move forward.

The veteran politician, a staunch opponent of President Yoweri Museveni, has remained in custody despite numerous petitions. He was previously denied bail and saw a prior request for transfer from Luzira Maximum Security Prison to a specialized medical facility rejected, despite mounting concerns over his physical condition.

### **Speaking after the 24th February court session, Senior Counsel Martha Karua raised alarm over Dr. Besigye's health:**

"In preparation for today's proceedings, I visited Dr. Kizza Besigye and was deeply disheartened by the deterioration of his health behind bars. This is, at its core, not merely a political or legal issue; what is happening to Dr. Besigye is a matter of urgent humanitarian concern.

As his legal team, we stand with his family and supporters in raising this concern not only before the courts but also with the public, given our grave worry about the additional toll these prolonged delays may have on his wellbeing."

Karua's remarks echoed concerns earlier raised by Dr. Besigye's wife, Winnie Byanyima, who serves as Executive Director of UNAIDS. In a public address in late January following a consultation with her husband's personal physician, Byanyima warned that his continued detention posed serious risks to his health.

"Every day that he remains ill, every day that he is forced to endure pain, weakness, and the humiliation of these appalling prison conditions, is the responsibility of his captors. President Museveni and his son, the army commander, are directly accountable for his suffering,"

Winnie Byanyima commented on Martha Karua's participation in her husband, Dr. Besigye's, court case today, expressing appreciation for the Senior Counsel for her "steadfast commitment" to his defense. Dr. Besigye had been apprehended in Nairobi while attending the launch of Karua's book, *Against the Tide*.

## A Ugandan Case; A Regional Concern

Hon. Martha Karua, who serves as the Party Leader of the People's Liberation Party (PLP) and is a Kenyan Presidential Aspirant for 2027, called on democratic leaders across East Africa to defend the right to free expression and fair legal processes.

"This is not only a Ugandan matter; it is a regional concern. The protection of democratic space across our continent is a shared responsibility. We should be concerned when governments use legal and administrative processes in ways that restrict dissent; the detention of Kizza Besigye in Nairobi reminds us that these issues extend beyond national borders."

This is, at its core, what is happening to Dr. Besigye is not merely political or legal a matter of urgent humanitarian concern

The Court scheduled a mention for 3rd March to confirm that the prosecution has complied with the disclosure orders, and set 12th March for the pre-trial conference to finalize the hearing dates and time allocation.

### #ENDS

**Note to Editors:** *Dr. Kizza Besigye was apprehended in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2024. He was initially arraigned before a military court before the case was transferred to the civilian High Court under treason charges.*

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### About Martha Karua

Martha Wangari Karua is a Kenyan lawyer and national leader who served as Member of Parliament for Gichugu Constituency and as Minister for Justice, National Cohesion & Constitutional Affairs. In the 2022 Kenya general elections, she was the presidential running mate to Raila Odinga under the Azimio la Umoja–One Kenya Coalition banner.

Martha is now eyeing the presidency in 2027 under her party, the People's Liberation Party (formerly NARC-Kenya). She is widely respected for her unwavering stand against corruption, strong advocacy for women's rights and gender equality, and her leadership in driving constitutional reform and accountable governance in Kenya and the region.

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