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## MAKERERE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2016

### Press Release

### **Why the Management of Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) will not Cooperate with the Vice Chancellor's Investigation Committee into MISR**

The Vice Chancellor of Makerere University, Prof. John Ddumba Ssentamu, yesterday circulated a memo on the Makerere University webmail setting up an Investigation Committee into MISR.

The Vice Chancellor of Makerere University has set up a Committee that will report to him. The Vice Chancellor lacks the moral authority and objectivity to set up and provide oversight for such a Committee. He is partisan and has a clear conflict of interest due to his close family relationship with Dr. Stella Nyanzi. The VC should exclude himself from the process. This would allow the Committee to conduct its work in an impartial manner as well as to look into the VC's own conduct, in particular, the extent of the VC's involvement in encouraging, fomenting and prolonging insubordination of both Dr. Nyanzi and a few graduate students of MISR, all of whom have been increasingly emboldened by what they see as the support towards their cause from the highest office in this institution; and the basis and accuracy of allegations the VC presented before the Appointments Board over the last few months to bolster his case against the PhD programme at MISR and the renewal of the Director's contract.

Incredibly, the terms of the Committee are totally silent about the events of Monday morning, **events** which have radically changed the situation at MISR and adversely affected MISR's position in the academic world. Dr. Stella Nyanzi defaced walls, vandalized property, hurled insults at the leadership of MISR and intimidated MISR staff and students, all of this with impunity. No self-respecting academic will want to



come to MISR if these circumstances continue. The best students will look for alternatives. Donors will look for other places to put their money. Until yesterday, we had demanded that Dr. Nyanzi teach in the doctoral programme. Now, the presence of Dr. Nyanzi threatens the very survival of the PhD program. Rather than teach in the PhD program, Dr. Nyanzi should be transferred to any other unit in the University that will accept her.

Instead of dealing with the events of Monday morning, the Committee's stated terms of reference include: investigating the genesis of the matter as well as evaluating the extent of the misunderstanding; ascertaining the working conditions at MISR; the reporting and assignment structure of staff; the extent to which the staff mentioned above [Dr. Nyanzi and Professor Mamdani] are disrupting each other's mandates and claims that the space at the Institute is occupied by non-members of the University Staff.

The Management of MISR was not consulted prior to constituting these terms of reference. We find these terms of reference partial, selective, and prejudicial. They are stacked to investigate the management of MISR and not Dr. Nyanzi, to investigate the director and divert attention from the events of Monday morning that have created an explosive crisis at MISR. The terms completely sidestep the issues at stake – the very survival of the MPhil/PhD program – and will not address the impunity and insubordination that has led us to this point. They read more like terms of reference for an inquisition seeking to rationalize pre-determined conclusions. Any impartial Committee would want to investigate the circumstances under which Dr. Nyanzi has continued to be paid as a civil servant without discharging her official duties and responsibilities as assigned by her unit head and how her continued insubordination and flagrant flouting of Makerere University regulations has consistently gone unpunished.

Yesterday, for instance, contrary to University regulations, Dr. Nyanzi, four students and a research assistant held a press conference with NTV crew in her office at MISR. It is lamentable that the University's leadership has busied itself with setting up a witch-hunting committee as MISR's PhD program is being dismantled before TV cameras and social media. If the program is to be killed, let it be killed in broad daylight. At least, then, the Ugandan people will know who to hold responsible for this tragic outcome.

With all of the above in mind, the MISR Management will not cooperate with the current Investigation Committee instituted by the VC, who has a vested interest in the outcome of the investigation, and who, given his recent maneuvers to circumvent specific MISR initiatives, cannot suddenly be seen to place MISR's and the University's interests above those of his kin, Dr. Nyanzi. The prerequisite to addressing the present

situation is three-fold: *one*, to set up a truly impartial consultative (rather than investigatory) process; *two*, to transfer Dr. Nyanzi from MISR, given her well-documented insistence that she will not teach in the PhD programme or participate in institutional research at MISR, but immediately to send Dr. Nyanzi for a month long leave with the understanding that she will not return to the Institute for any reason; and, *three*, to consult all constituencies (students, academic staff, management) in the process that follows and do it only after the new semester begins in mid-May.

Mahmood Mamdani  
Professor and Executive Director, MISR

Cc: Chairperson, Makerere University Council  
Chairperson, Appointments Board  
Vice Chancellor  
Deputy Vice Chancellor, Finance and Administration  
Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs  
Director, Human Resources  
Principal, CHUSS  
Dr. Stella Nyanzi  
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