

Ugandan academic charged over Museveni 'buttocks' jibe

KAMPALA - A prominent female academic and activist was charged on Monday with cyber-harassment for calling President Yoweri Museveni a "pair of buttocks" in a Facebook post.

University lecturer Dr Stella Nyanzi, 42, has raised eyebrows in the conservative country for sexually explicit social media posts in which she has frequently criticised the president and his wife.

She has lashed out at Janet Museveni, who is also education minister, after government reneged on a campaign to supply free sanitary pads to poor schoolgirls and launching vitriolic attacks against the first couple.

Nyanzi appeared in a court in Kampala on Monday, where she was charged with making a remark that was "obscene or indecent."

The charge sheet referred to a Facebook post on January 28 "where she made a suggestion or proposal referring (to) His Excellency, Yoweri Museveni as among others, 'a pair of buttocks'."

The Facebook post reads: "That is what buttocks do. They shake, jiggle, shit and fart. Museveni is just another pair of buttocks... Ugandans should be shocked that we allowed these buttocks to continue leading our country."

There was no reference to any charge for insults to the first lady.

"Dr Stella Nyanzi has been charged with cyber-harassment and offensive communication (and) using her Facebook posts to disturb President Museveni's privacy, which she denies," her lawyer Nicholas Opiyo told AFP.

"Dr. Nyanzi is within her constitutional rights and we are for an all-out legal battle with the state to defend her rights."

Nyanzi, whose work specialises in the study of African sexualities, is often accused by commentators on her page of missing a chance to make an impact on serious issues through her regular use of graphic sexual imagery and descriptions.

Maria Burnett, senior Africa Researcher at Human Rights Watch, on Saturday criticised the arrest as an attack on free expression.

"The arrest and criminal charges brought against Dr. Nyanzi are yet another clear indicator that those who express critical views of the government can face its wrath," Burnett said.

"The manner of Nyanzi's arrest on Friday was more about intimidation than law enforcement," she added.

Nyanzi shot to prominence in April 2016 when she stripped naked at her university to protest the closure of her office, and later shared the nude photos of herself on social media.

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