

BLACK MONDAY

Citizen Action Against theft of our money without SHAME!

Editorial

Let us Welcome and Honour Pope Francis!

Uganda is yet to receive His Holiness Pope Francis as part of his pastoral visit to the African Continent. This indeed is a great opportunity for the people of Uganda that will go a long way in promoting our international relations; national tourism and heritage. Pope Francis is on record for promoting peace, social justice, equality and rule of law. The timing of the Pope's visit requires us to reflect further on how Uganda is ready to embrace the same values that the Pope espouses. The pre-election epoch has already indicated that we are capable of failing on these values as seen from the levels of violence and high levels of voter bribery.

This special visit also requires citizens to pay keen interest in the matters concerning the financial management of the preparations. Our records in the past with such international events like CHOGM have dragged senior government officials in courts of law over embezzled funds. Unfortunately, these funds have never been refunded and the taxpayer continues to lose. This visit therefore being one of a Holy man of God calls for our leaders to respect him but also his call for respect of humanity and self-dignity.

This edition indeed makes analysis of the funds that we lost in the past to such events but also brings in a citizen's letter to the Pope indicating the real issues at the heart of Ugandans. We would like to implore citizens to pay keen interest in this event but also promote the values of His Holiness Pope Francis. We all have a call to humanity and to ensure that we live in a peaceful and just world.

Welcome to Uganda Pope Francis!
Richard Ssewakiryanga

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Honor the Pope with a Theft Free Visit

I ask you to ensure that humanity is served by wealth and not rule by it



The year was November 2007. The world's cameras were focused on Uganda. The event was the Common Wealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and the eye catcher guest? Queen Elizabeth of England. The kill joy? The monster of corruption that reared its ugly head, gripping every bit of the most costly event Uganda has hosted since 1962, with public officials going down the drain to siphon every coin they could land their hands on. The initial budgeted cost for the headliner event was Shs 180 billion but this swelled to Shs 278 billion when supplementary budgets came into the picture. Some reports put the final cost at between Shs 300 billion and Shs 380 billion.

Powerful Ministers Amama Mbabazi, John Byabagambi, Mwesigwa Rukutana, Isaac Musumba, John Nasasira, Sam Kutesa had their names dragged in the headlines for alleged mismanagement of the funds. None was ever convicted and former vice president Gilbert Bukenya, ministers Sam Kutesa, John Nasasira and Mwesigwa Rukutana were acquitted.

A probe commissioned by President Yoweri Museveni discovered that money was lost in irregular procurement of the CHOGM cars, road construction and repairs, and renovation of Entebbe Airport, among other ventures. To date these ministers are still at large.

Fast forward to 2015. Eight years later, global attention is back to Kampala. On November 27, all eyes will be on Uganda and excitement is already in the air over the Pope's maiden visit. This will be Pope Francis' first time to say mass in Africa. Uganda hosted Pope Paul VI in 1969 and Pope John Paul II in 1993.

Whereas there is every reason to be excited, there is also every reason not to be worried per se but call for caution.

The budget for the visit and attendant works is reason we must keep our eyes open 24/7, not because we don't trust our government but because our government's track record does not give us reason to trust it.

The ghost of CHOGM continues to hover over our hosting international guests. As we host His Holiness, the country is walking on egg shells, our fingers are crossed, hoping that the event will not be clogged by scandal later, especially now that the government has taken over the preparations and refurbishment of the Catholic Martyrs Shrines at Namugongo and Munyonyo. It is a responsibility

of all Ugandans to ensure the visit is a success and the renovation works get on well, the same way it is our duty to keep our ears and eyes alert.

The budget for the visit and attendant works is reason we must keep our eyes open 24/7, not because we don't trust our government but because our government's track record does not give us reason to trust it. It is healthy mistrust, especially if that mistrust is translated into vigilance that can keep the thieves at bay. A poorly managed papal visit, tainted by corruption damages our reputation as a people, and leaves the tax payer, the good hearted corporate companies, ordinary faithful contributing to the event's activities at a loss.

According to the project designs, a 1,000 seater church will be constructed, three pavilions, a 100 car parking lot, dormitories, museum, a gallery, offices, an ultra-sized walkway, among others. The entire project is expected to cost \$14 million (Shs36 billion). The redevelopment of the Uganda Martyrs Shrine at Namugongo, is expected to cost Shs 50b, while that at Munyoyo is expected to cost Shs 23.5b.

It is these sums of money that give us reason to be vigilant and call upon the different stakeholders involved in the preparations and post papal visit

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Honor the Pope with a Theft Free Visit

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activities such as the ongoing refurbishment of the shrines, to put country first and desist from letting the CHOGM ghost haunt us.

The shrines come with immense economic benefits that are associated with any place of heritage. Mecca gets 4,000,000 (four million) pilgrims, who pay \$300 each, annually. Israel collects \$2bn (two billion dollars) from the tourists who visit Bethlehem. The site at Namugongo currently attracts up to 1 million pilgrims every June 3, yet if they are redeveloped, this capacity could be

increased. If all goes per plan, we shall be able to reap from the double benefit of the redevelopment, including solving the puzzle of the swelling numbers and tourism. Countries like Israel, Saudi Arabia and Italy, which are home to some of the famous faith locations, are already raking in millions annually from "faith-based tourism."

Let us take lessons from speaker of parliament Rebecca Kadaga who hosted the Inter Parliamentary Union conference and to avoid a repeat of CHOGM ensured strict scrutiny of the procurement process.

Media reports had indicated there was a plot by her enemies to plant people to corrupt the procurement so her name could be dragged in the mud. She instead got opposition legislators with impeccable integrity records to handle the slippery aspects of the conference's finances. That way the IPU went scandal free. It took extra care on the part of the organisers. It will take extra care from us all, for the Papal visit not to get tainted by the CHOGM ghosts.

By Ivan Okuda



A set of statues depicting the torching of the Uganda martyrs.

Dear Pope Francis

I am taking the risk of being excommunicated from the Catholic Church by writing to you.

But I am ready to take the chance rather than be a hypocrite. I believe that like the poor Uganda martyrs – who you will commemorate this month – did, the truth must be told.

I woke up on October 31, 2015 ready to join other Ugandans in a charity walk that was organised by the Vision Group to raise funds for your three-day visit later this month.

You are the third pope visiting Uganda in my lifetime and I'm so eager to witness the occasion. Pope Paul VI came in 1969, just before my fourth birthday. Then St Pope John Paul II visited when I had just graduated from university. At the time, I was very enthusiastic about the great life ahead of me.

Now you are coming when I am so worried about the future of my country. We are having general elections next year and there is a lot of tension.

Close to two million crime preventers have been trained to 'deal' with all those that will oppose President Yoweri Museveni, your host. Many people are living in constant fear of being arrested and tortured for expressing their political views. Pray for us, dear Father.

Thousands of pensioners have spent

months without receiving their gratuity. I suppose some of their money is being used to prepare for your coming. Many Ugandans cannot afford a decent meal but they are sacrificing in order to give you a grand welcome.

That is what we do in Africa. And as for Ugandans, we are very hospitable people. We bathe, wash our linen and clean up when we expect visitors. We do not want them to think that we are bad and poor people.

We are sleeping hungry and surrendering the few pennies we have to our bishops preparing for your visit, to save our African face. As a good Catholic, I have made my contribution towards this cause.

I am happy to even do more for the Church. I bought the tickets for the charity walk, for myself and my family. We were all excited about the walk.

Then, all of a sudden, an inner voice told me that this was all hypocrisy. The voice said that instead of walking, I should write to you. Holy Father, I hope you understand my predicament. Forgive me but I cannot go against my conscience.

I know that all the money being raised from the charity walk will be used to refurbish the Namugongo and Munyonyo Martyrs shrines. I'm very proud of the fantastic work being done there. In all the churches where I have attended Holy Mass

in previous months, millions of shillings have been collected from the poverty-stricken Ugandans because of your coming.

The buzz around your visit is so loud and sickening. At my church in Kiwatule, a Kampala suburb, the chief executive officer of the Vision Group, Robert Kabushenga, was there on Sunday October 25, selling tickets for the charity walk. He also visited several churches, including Christ the King in Kampala.

Two days later, I met him again with his grand army of collectors in Bukalango, a prayer retreat centre in Wakiso district, where he raised over Shs 4m.

Many Ugandans want the best and memorable papal visit, but the extravagance of the preparations, amidst the biting poverty and hardships faced by most of them, is unbearable.

This is why I have decided not to participate in any other fundraising activities for your visit, because I know it is against your principles. I will put my hard-earned money to other deserving causes, but not to the pompous ventures being undertaken.

Holy Father, things are bad here. I recall your words that your people back home in Argentina are poor and you are one of them. Definitely, we must be poorer than your people. Can you imagine that the total bill for the renovation of the Namugongo Catholic Martyrs shrine alone is at Shs 50 bn, which is over \$12.5m! Just imagine the entire cost of your visit to us.

By the way, I had forgotten to tell you that thousands of Ugandan mothers

die while giving birth and millions of our children do not celebrate their fifth birthday. Many people still die of curable and avoidable diseases. We do not even have enough drugs for our brethren suffering from HIV/Aids. And all this is because our country is very poor.

Holy Father, I have heard that you are very humble and have continuously and tirelessly worked for the wellbeing of the poor. And that you are also committed to bridging the gap between people of various backgrounds, classes, beliefs and faiths through peaceful talks.

You have publicly refused most luxuries offered to a pope and, instead, lived a simple and humble lifestyle. I admire your work of promoting peace, supporting the poor and denouncing human trafficking.

Forgive us, Holy Father. Here in Uganda, we have a silent policy of sending young people to work as slaves in other countries, because there are no jobs back home.

You have previously criticized the "cult of money" that is driving the global financial system. In your own words, you have asserted that "the greatness of a society is found in the ways it treats those most in need; those who have nothing apart from their poverty."

You said that inequality fuels violence. That is Uganda for you.

Forgive me, Father, if I have sinned for writing to you.

Your Humble Servant,
Sheilla Kawamara Mishambi

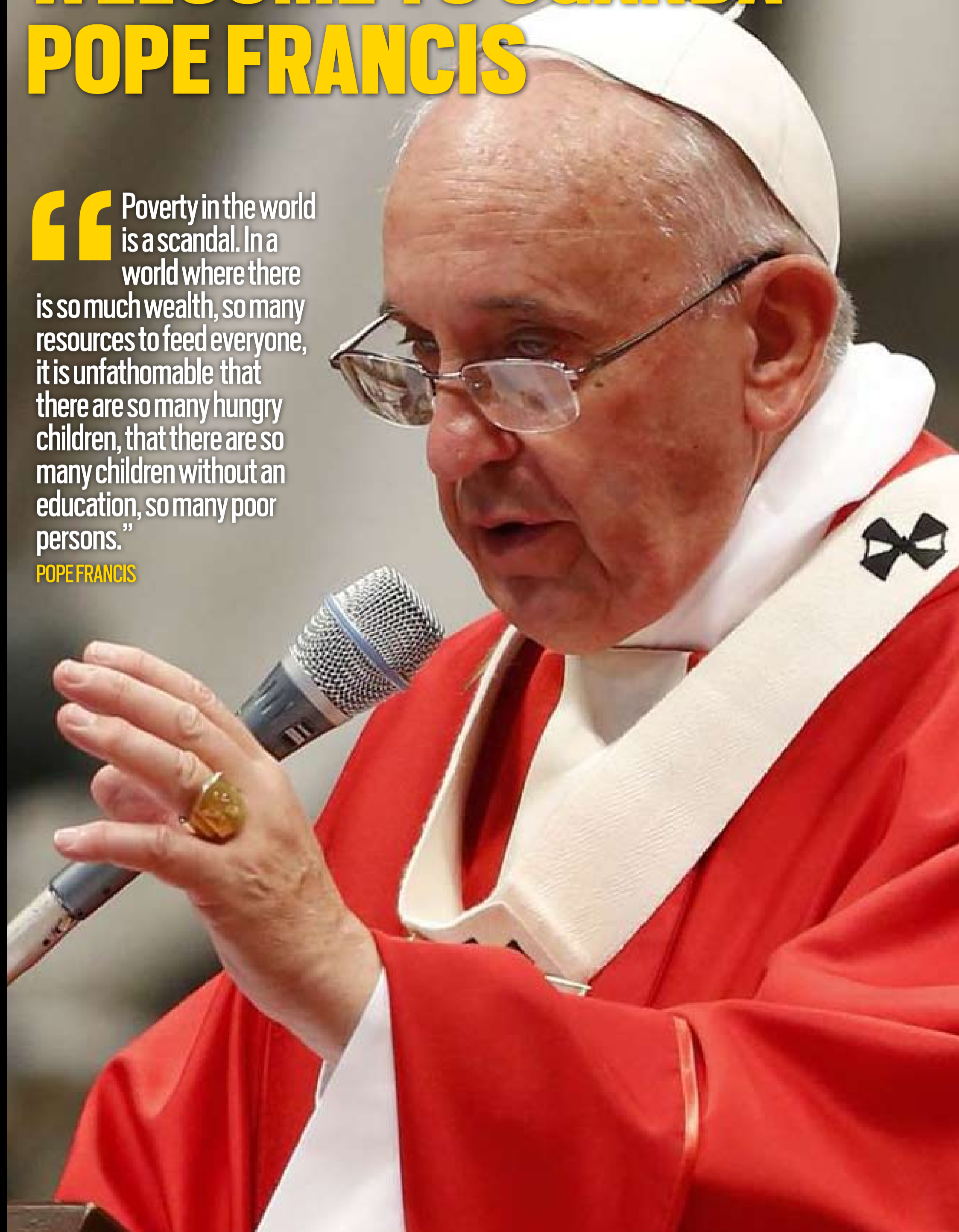


2 | A woman affiliated with the Forum for Democratic Change being arrested by Uganda police officers early last month as she was enroute to Rukungiri to participate in Dr Kizza Besigye's rally.

WELCOME TO UGANDA POPE FRANCIS

“Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons.”

POPE FRANCIS



SUMMARY OF CORRUPTION SCANDALS TO LOOK BACK AT



What must we do to get our money back

Wear only black clothes every Monday to show you are tired of theft.

Demand political action from the President

Isolate every thief implicated in a theft scandal. Don't invite them to your burials, weddings.

Do not buy goods or services from businesses owned by thieves. Support Ugandans working honestly to make a living.

Until all the thieves have returned our money.

For Contact, Inquiries or Feedback on this Black Monday Movement Bulletin, write to blackmondaymovement@ngoforum.or.ug

National NGO Forum +256 414 510 272 - info@ngoforum.or.ug
 ActionAid Uganda +256 414 510 258 - Info.uganda@actionaid.org
 HURINET-U +256414286923 - info@hurinet.or.ug

Anti Corruption Coalition Uganda +256 414 535 660 - info@accu.or.ug
 DENIVA +256 414 530 575 - info@deniva.or.ug
 Uganda Youth Network +256312276944 - info@uyonet.or.ug
 Forum for Women In Democracy (FOWODE) fowode@fowode.org/ +256414286063

@BLACKMONDAY_UG

BLACK Monday Movement