

Kenyan Musicians probed over hate speech

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The Kenyan government, through the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, is investigating three vernacular musicians for what is said to be hate speech contained in their recently-released songs. The artistes, who sing in their native Kikuyu language, recently released songs in support of Central Kenya politician and ICC suspect Uhuru Kenyatta, who is a native of Kikuyu.



Uhuru Kenyatta is facing criminal charges related to crimes against humanity, allegedly committed at the height of the post election violence that rocked Kenya in the wake of the December 2007 general elections.

The three singers, Kamande wa Kioi, John De'Mathew and Muigai wa Njoroge released the songs at varied dates between late last year and early this year. The songs have been playing in local vernacular stations and on the streets of Kenya.

The National Cohesion chair, Dr Mzalendo Kibunjia, said that the commission has received the audio recordings of the songs, and have forwarded them to a translation expert, after which necessary steps will be taken against the trio.

One of the songs, titled 'Uhuru Ni Witu', (Uhuru is our Son) by Kamande wa Kioi, urges Prime Minister Raila Odinga to anoint Uhuru Kenyatta as the King of Kenya, and urges members of the Kikuyu community to unite behind Kenyatta. He also hits out at the International Criminal Court for charging Uhuru.

Part of the translated version of the song states as follows: "Greetings people of the house of Kikuyu and Mumbi. I bring you a message from all Kikuyu musicians. This is a message from God. Uhuru is the Moses of the Kikuyu nation. He is meant to move Kikuyus from Egypt to Canaan. Do not agree to be divided. Let all votes go to him. He is ours. He is anointed by God, poured oil on. Raila, there is a call. Go to Mama Ngina's house, a king has been born there. Once

there ask where Uhuru is seated and pour oil on him. Just like Samuel did for David in the Bible. Stop chasing the wind Agwambo, go to Icaweri (Uhuru's native village) and anoint Uhuru. You thump your chest about Hague, is Hague your mother's? There is a curse from God. Philistines who do not circumcise cannot lead Israel.

When Abraham stressed God, he was told to go get cut, even you General of Migingo, your knife is being sharpened," say some of the translated song lyrics. The song is directed at members of Raila Odinga's Luo community, whose traditions never allowed male circumcision.

On his part, Muigai wa njoroge's song, titled 'Hague Bound', takes a question and answer approach, whose translations goes as follows: Question: What if you knew that you are being pushed to the Hague by an uncircumcised man who wants to push you there and take over your wife and all your wealth? A man who can do anything to ensure you are in problems.

Answer: Then it is better to die. Things for men are not governed by an uncircumcised man. I would kill him. Its better they increase my charges.

Question: What would you tell your crying supporters as you are being shipped to the Hague?

Answer: I would tell them to pray for me and know I am being persecuted for my love of my community.

Question: When you get to Hague how you would ensure the white man does not cheat you?

Answer: I would ask for proceedings to be done in Kikuyu.

Question: When on the dock what would you be thinking of the uncircumcised man who is the source of your predicament?

Answer: I would ask God to forgive him. I would also ask that he gets circumcised so that he matures mentally. I would also ask Kenyans to be very wary of that man.

John DeMathew on his part takes a different approach, singing in parables. His song that has raised eyebrows is titled 'Mwaka wa Hiti' (The year of The Hyena) Its translated version is said to have the following information: "As Demathew I prophesize and let the stones hear me if men won't. It is now the year of the hyena. Who will teach you and your ears are blocked? When a man is seated he sees further than a boy on top of a tree. You are like a greedy hyena seeing a man walk and following him hoping that his arm will drop off. You follow him till he boards the train and the arm does not drop and you never eat. Before Jesus was crucified, He stood in the court Judge Pilato and he answered all questions, Judge Pilato said Jesus is free but the crowd asked that a thief be freed instead."

Where are you from? If you were one of us, you would be pained by the people burnt in Kiambaa church. My brother lost his property in Kisumu, how can you tell us he is our community's friend. Father (Jomo Kenyatta) I feel sad when I see your son (Uhuru) being persecuted by men of ill-will (Peter kenneth) and a woman (Marthat Karua) is carrying their bags".

If found culpable, the artistes could face a five year jail term each, or a fine of Kshs 1Million

(around USD 1250) or both. The Commission is also investigating FM stations thought to have played the songs on air. The three artistes are hugely popular amongst the kikuyu listeners, and all have .been accompanying politicians from central Kenya on their campaign trail, providing entertainment.

The songs have elicited a sharp reaction from a section of Kenyans, who have chastised the Cohesion Commission for taking too long before acting. They added that the songs have been in circulation for far much too long, and yet still some of the have been playing on three vernacular FM stations namely kameme FM-that is owned by Uhuru Kenyatta, Inooro FM-Owned by businessman SK Macharia and Coro FM which is owned by the state. Kameme FM last month hosted one of the musicians-Muigai wa noroge- on the breakfast show'

Uhuru Kenyatta and his party The National Alliance (TNA) late on Tuesday castigated the singers for the songs, and disowned the messages. But most Kenyans who spoke to Africa News said that it was a little too late.

Last year, when he appeared before the ICC at The Hague, Uhuru kenyatta was at pains to explain an article that had been published in a local newspaper linking him to the violence. He was asked why he did not distance himself from the writer-Peter Kagwanja's views.

Kenya is slated for the general elections in March next year, as fears of a repeat of the chaos that happened in 2007-08 are high. As politicians take on the campaign trail, the fear of inflammatory speeches from politicians abound. Currently, there are over 30,000 people living in the camps for the Internally Displace Persons, as they await resettlement.