News

Fredrick Nzwili

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Catholic bishops in Uganda are mourning Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga of Kampala, who was found dead in his room April 3.

His death shocked the East African nation, where the archbishop had come to be known as a defender of the rights of the poor and the downtrodden. The cause of death was not released immediately.

The 68-year-old archbishop will be buried April 8 at St. Mary’s and Sacred Heart Cathedral Rubaga in Kampala.

Bishop Joseph Antony Zziwa, chairman of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, expressed the bishops' deep regret at the death of the archbishop.

On April 2, the country had watched the archbishop join other Christian leaders in a Way of the Cross procession in St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral. The activity had been organized by the Uganda Joint Christian Council, an ecumenical grouping of Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox Churches.

From time to time, Lwanga attracted the ire of government officials after he castigated injustices and government excesses. In 2018, he charged that the government had recruited priests and nuns to spy on him. The archbishop said a caller had told him that the government thought he wanted to overthrow it.

Recently, he had been condemning corruption, abductions, disappearances and killings related to January elections.

In his last message at the Good Friday gathering, Lwanga said the disappearance of people — especially young people — was brewing anger, divisions and anxiety among the citizens and contravened human rights frameworks.

"We are troubled that the disregard of God-given rights and freedoms will weaken our social fiber of harmony, social cohesion and responsive leadership," the archbishop said.

Religious, political and social leaders have continued to eulogize Lwanga. Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu said Lwanga's death left a huge gap in the Ugandan Catholic Church.

On April 3, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said in a Twitter message: "With profound grief, I have learnt of the death of Kampala Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga. I join the Catholic Church, all religious faithful and the country in mourning Archbishop Lwanga. He died in faith."

Lwanga was born in Kyabakadde in the Buganda region of Uganda. He was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Kampala in 1978. He was named bishop of the new Diocese of Kasana-Luweero in 1996. In 2006, he became the archbishop of Kampala after the retirement of Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala.

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