

ODWAR DENIS (2014-MO62-20011)

Examining Civil Leaders' Opinion on the Regulation of the Freedom to Assemble and Associate by the Public Order Management Act: A Case Study of Lira Municipality Lira District.

The study examined the opinions of Civil Leaders on the regulation of the exercise of freedom to assemble and freedom of association in Uganda by the Public Order Management Act (POMA) (2013). In particular, the study examined the opinion of civil leaders on the intent, interpretation, and enforcement of POMA (2013) on the regulation of the exercise of freedom to assemble and freedom to associate. A qualitative research approach using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions was mainly applied to obtain information. A sample of 92 respondents was selected using a purposive sampling technique. The data was analysed using content analysis method. The findings of the study reveal that 74% of the civil leaders who participated in this research complied with the POMA's requirement of giving notice to the relevant authority before organising and holding public meetings, and assemblies. However, only 28% of the civil leaders expressed awareness of the content of the POMA (2013). This may imply that civil leaders have poor interpretation of the Act and also the way it is being enforced. Sixty seven percent of the civil leaders had the opinion that the Act is interfering with the activities of the opposition politicians of holding public rallies and assemblies in their constituencies. The study recommends that the procedure required for conducting public gatherings should end with giving notice to the police. The power of allowing or disallowing public gathering is being misused, and thus, should not be vested in the Inspector General of Police (IGP) or the authorised officer, as the Act says. There should be more sensitisation on POMA (2013) and the Act should be translated into local languages for easy access and understanding by uneducated people, and for the POMA (2013) to be enforced and applied in a non-selective manner to all.

Key Word: Civil Leaders' Opinion, Public Order Management Act, Lira District