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IBPP Research Associates: Uganda

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-----Issue joint statement against the bombs

The three bomb blasts in Kampala Sunday night could not have come at a worse time. Elections are usually tense-filled moments in Uganda, and this year we have had in two weeks, the level of violence we had in the whole of the 1996 presidential elections.

One can be sure that two things will happen. That we shall soon hear some opponents of incumbent Yoweri Museveni accusing his camp of masterminding the bombs in order to impose draconian security controls against his rivals; and possibly to postpone elections.

And, secondly, the Museveni camp will accuse his rivals of being linked to terrorists, and trying to use bombs to scare the electorate from voting for their man because the bombers will not stop the attacks until he is no longer president.

Whatever the case, the bombs are not good for democracy, because people will make electoral decisions out of fear.

It sounds ridiculous to appeal to the bomb attackers to stop their activities, because they don't believe in non-violent methods of work.

However, being a democrat is a very frustrating business. You can say something intelligent and good for the country for 20 years, and for as many years you will be ignored. You can even be jailed for your pains.

If you are a democrat and don't believe in violence, you need more than the five years that Museveni and his guerrillas took to fight a bush war and grab power. You have to be like Kibirige Mayanja. He run in the 1996 presidential elections and lost, and he is back campaigning again, not in the least sounding depressed about the fact that he is, apparently, not yet the front-runner. Some other politicians, like the new Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade, spent more than half their lives running for president, until he made it after about six attempts! For Uganda, the sheer number of candidates, and the high level of enthusiasm for the presidential campaigns, proves that the majority of people prefer the lawful democratic path.

Therefore, the presidential candidates should not only avoid politicising the bombs, but all the six of them should get together and Issue a joint statement condemning the terrorist attacks. (Keywords: Democracy, Terrorism, Uganda.)