

## **National Heroes' Day: June 9**

**Heroes' Day is a public holiday in Uganda.**

Uganda—also known as the Republic of Uganda—is a land-locked country which is located in East Africa. It is surrounded by Sudan to the north, Congo to the west, Kenya to the east, and Tanzania to the south. Like most other countries, Uganda too had to fight for its freedom and independence. In Uganda, Heroes' Day is celebrated every year on June 9. This is celebrated in memory of those who sacrificed their lives in order to restore peace and security to their homeland. This day marks the beginning of the struggle to liberate the country.

### **HISTORY OF HEROES' DAY IN UGANDA**

There are heroes in every country, heroes who lay down their life for what they believe. In Uganda, a number of men and women laid down their lives during the guerrilla war which was fought between 1981 and 1985.

On June 9, 1981, many men and women were brutally murdered for refusing to reveal the hiding place of the soldiers of the National Resistance Army. It was on the same day that Edidian Mukiibi Luttamaguzi was killed brutally. He was murdered during the regime of Milton Obote. It was Milton Obote and the functionaries of the UPC party who were responsible for the brutal murder. This is considered one of the main causes of the war that broke out.

It was until after the guerrilla war in 1985 that the NRA/M (National Resistance Army) government came to power. It was then that Yoweri Museveni came to power and told the people of Uganda that the NRM government was different from any other government that had ruled Uganda. He said that the change of guard that day was not just an

ordinary change and that it was a fundamental and basic change in the political scene of Uganda.

Though Heroes' Day was commemorated to honor those who laid down their lives during the guerrilla war, the country already had other heroes like Professor Yusuf Lule and former President Ignatius Musasizi. In 2001, an act was passed in the Parliament of Uganda which recognized the 9th of June as Heroes' Day.

### **UGANDA'S HEROES' DAY TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS AND ACTIVITIES**

Many countries like the Republic of Uganda celebrate Heroes' Day to honor their national heroes. It could be to honor them for their struggle to free the nation or to restore peace and security in their country.

Internally, there are some tensions about the effectiveness of Heroes' Day and its message. The Forum for Democratic Change has been noted at times to denounce the celebrations as useless and a waste of tax payer's dollars.