

Justice Up for Sale in Kenya, Says Githongo
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Former Ethics and Governance Permanent Secretary Mr John Githongo now says justice in Kenya is up for sale.

"You can easily buy justice in Kenya, the criminal justice system is in a mess and it needs urgent review," he said.

Former anti-corruption chief, John Githongo, speaks during the Annual African Studies lecture at St Antony's College, Oxford University yesterday. Pic by Peter Karanja

Speaking on Tuesday evening during the Annual African Studies lecture at St Antony's College, Oxford University, Githongo said graft was killing the poor.

"The bureaucracy of Kenya's Judiciary has failed its citizens, who have become prisoners of the system," he said.

The former anti-corruption chief said unwillingness by the leadership - presidents and the Prime Ministers in Africa- makes it difficult to deal with corruption.

"Most African leaders are the main drive behind the graft," he said.

In a lecture on Phase Two of the Fight Against Corruption in Africa: Taking on the Politics, Githongo said the less fortunate were frustrated by court delays. He said the main players in graft were politicians, businessmen, civil servants and security services.

The 40-minute lecture addressed graft in Africa and touched on sensitive issues on Kenya. Most questions directed to him by the audience were on Kenya.

Githongo said the Judiciary, Legislature and Executive were all affected by graft and delivery of public services in many sectors of government had been compromised.

"Corruption in Kenya starts at a personal level mainly with politicians and they bribe their way all through to the corridors of power," he said.

Githongo is a Senior Associate Member at St Antony's College, which is one of the graduate colleges of Oxford University. The college specialises in international relations, economics, politics and history of particular parts of the world.

Githongo said corruption knows no boundaries and it affects many sectors such as energy and communications. He avoided talk on his controversial resignation from government and declined to talk to the Press.

Githongo, who was Permanent Secretary for Governance and Ethics in the Office of the President, resigned on February 7, while on official duty in the United Kingdom.

He did not say why he quit government but merely said that he could not stay on. He has remained in an undisclosed location in the UK since his resignation.

Yesterday's lecture will be the second time the former anti-corruption chief has appeared in public in Europe since his resignation.

On April 14, he spoke to the BBC in Berlin, Germany, after receiving an award from German President Horst Kohler.

During the interview, Githongo said Africa's biggest let-down in the war against corruption was "its sense of respect and deference to the elderly".