

TI Row Spills Over Into Berlin Parent Chapter
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Transparency International founder Peter Eigen was expected to travel to Kenya following a fall-out in the anti-corruption organisation's board in Nairobi that saw its local boss opting to resign.

Ms Gladwell Otieno, who resigned on Thursday as TI-Kenya executive director, told the Sunday Nation yesterday that her move had put the Government's commitment to the war on corruption in focus.

Ms Otieno - who was appointed to the post at the beginning of 2003, replacing Mr John Githongo after he was appointed President Kibaki's adviser on graft - quit on Thursday allegedly after she disagreed with the TI board over some remarks against the Government.

Mr Githongo resigned as Governance and Ethics permanent secretary in February after reportedly growing disenchanted with the Government's graft was.

Although TI is an independent organisation and completely independent of the Government, many observers said its board, led by University of Nairobi chancellor Joe Wanjui, has many people close to the President.

Ms Otieno told the Sunday Nation yesterday that the organisation's TI headquarters in Berlin, Germany, was concerned about her move.

Other sources said Mr Eigen, the founder-chairman of the parent board, might be travelling to Kenya to see the situation for himself.

He is believed to have a sentimental tie to the Kenyan chapter as it was while he worked in Kenya for the World Bank in the late 1980s that he came up with the idea of forming TI.

He was an associate of Nairobi University chancellor Joe Wanjui, the local chapter's board chairman, and Mr Joe Githongo, father of John, and the three and others tried unsuccessfully for five years to register TI during the Kanu regime.

Although the Kenya chapter is independent, the parent board may delink itself from a national chapter if it is unhappy with it. Were this to happen to the local chapter, it would no longer use the TI logo and forgo benefits from the parent TI.

South Mugirango MP James Omingo Magara said that by pressurising Ms Otieno to resign, the TI board had deflated those speaking out against corruption.

Meanwhile, the Name and Shame Corruption Campaign Network (NASCON), which is affiliated to the National Convention Executive Council (Ncec) lobby group, expressed shock at Ms Otieno's resignation.

A statement signed by Mr Geoffrey Birundu of NASCON and Mr Ndung'u Wainaina, the Ncec programme manager, said the public would link the resignation to the "power and influence of corruption networks in President Kibaki's regime".

Speaking to the Sunday Nation, Ms Otieno said that even though she was no longer with TI, she would continue fighting corruption.

But she would not speculate on the next step for TI Kenya, saying that it would be unfair of her to comment now that she was no longer there.

Meanwhile, TI Kenya deputy director, Mr Mwalimu Mati, who has been abroad, arrived in Nairobi yesterday morning