

Janani Jakaliya Luwum, Ugandan archbishop killed by Idi Amin, honored with public holiday

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [March 18, 2015](#) issue

Janani Jakaliya Luwum, an Anglican archbishop recognized as a martyr, was honored by a public holiday celebrating his life and ministry in Uganda on February 16.

Luwum challenged dictator Idi Amin to put an end to extrajudicial killings, political repression, corruption, and ethnic persecution. Amin ruled Uganda from 1971 to 1979, during which time human rights groups estimate that 100,000 to 500,000 people were killed.

Luwum was arrested on February 16, 1977, along with two cabinet ministers; authorities said the men died in a car accident. Reports suggest that Amin ordered the deaths and state that there were bullets in the bodies of the three men when they were released to relatives.

Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni spoke at an international memorial in Luwum's home village and burial site, 14 miles north of Kitgum in northern Uganda, organized by the Anglican Church of Uganda.

"He chose to die for the truth," Museveni said at the memorial. "We salute him for that, and we shall always be grateful to his memory forever."

John Sentamu, the Ugandan-born archbishop of York, England, delivered the sermon. He had met Luwum when he was posted in Gulu as a magistrate. Luwum challenged him to use his position to bring justice to a country where prisons were filled with people wrongfully accused.

"We must be Christ to his people," Sentamu recalled Luwum saying. "Take up their cases."

Luwum was a parish priest from 1956 to 1969, when he was elected to serve the bishop of Northern Uganda Diocese. In 1974, he was chosen archbishop of Uganda and served Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire), in addition to Uganda.

The Anglican Communion commemorates Luwum on February 17, the day his death was announced, and a statue of him stands at the front of London's Westminster Abbey. —Religion News Service; added sources