

## Testify, Ouko Probe Team Orders Envoy

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Kenya's ambassador to the Somali peace talks has been ordered to appear before the parliamentary committee investigating Foreign minister Robert Ouko's death.

Mr Bethwel Kiplagat, the team ruled yesterday, risked arrest if he failed to appear before it on Tuesday.

Mr Kiplagat was Foreign permanent secretary in February, 1990, when Dr Ouko disappeared from his Koru home before he was later found dead at the foot of Got Alila.

Some witnesses told the committee, which sits at Parliament's Old Chambers, Nairobi, that Mr Kiplagat, accompanied by security men, searched Dr Ouko's office and removed his private documents after the minister went missing.

Mr Kiplagat is also alleged to have advised President Moi to continue with the breakfast prayer visit to Washington despite Dr Ouko's warning that the entourage risked a hostile reception.

Yesterday, the committee was told that Mr Kiplagat had turned down summons to give evidence before it.

A process server, a Mr Mboimet, said: "Mr Kiplagat was bonded last month but said he was busy and would come another day.

"He said he was going to write a letter stating when he will make himself available. I have, however, called his secretary 10 times to know when the letter is going to be written."

Last week, the official met Mr Kiplagat at the Foreign Office as he prepared to leave for the US and served him. "He wrote a few comments saying he will communicate when he would appear," Mr Mboimet added.

On Monday, the server was at Mr Kiplagat's office again but the envoy allegedly said he was not ready to receive the summons as he had no appointment with Mboimet.

"He said I was ambushing him," Mr Mboimet said.

Yesterday, Mr Mboimet and a police sergeant were unable to meet the ambassador at the Kenya College of Communications Technology, Mbagathi, where the Somali National Reconciliation Conference is going on. They gave his secretary the summons.

Committee members agreed with chairman Gor Sunguh that the envoy erred by failing to heed the summons.

"The law is very clear: the committee may order any person to produce material, documents or books or to be examined before it," Mr Sunguh said.

Mr Kiplagat's failure to attend, the committee said, was against the National Assembly Powers and Privileges Act, and they directed him to appear in person at 10 am on Tuesday.

"He has no choice otherwise the police will carry out actions in view of the National Assembly and Privileges Act. He is trying to challenge the supremacy of Parliament... I don't think there's any meeting more important than the responsibility of Parliament," Mr Sunguh warned.

Saying a public servant must respect Parliament, Mr Sunguh added that another witness had tried to refuse to appear before the committee but had done so when the committee sat in Kisumu last week.

The committee, Mr Sunguh said, wanted to complete its investigations "as soon as possible."