



Doctor declined plum job as “being too risky”

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OMONDI GWENGI

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A top doctor who turned down an appointment to replace the suspended Kenyatta National Hospital boss Lilly Koros in an acting capacity has spoken out on why he rejected the offer.

Dr John Ong'ech, a chief specialist at the hospital said he declined the offer because the job was one of the most dangerous in the country.

Health Cabinet Secretary Sicily Kariuki sent Koros on compulsory leave after an embarrassing and deadly mix-up in which doctors performed a delicate brain operation on a wrong patient.

The neuro-surgeon who performed the operation and a team that helped him were also sent on forced leave to give room for investigations.

This sparked protests from other doctors who went on strike to demand the reinstatement of their colleagues.

Kariuki had announced that Ong'ech would oversee the management of the hospital in an acting capacity. She also appointed Dr Thomas Mutie as an acting director of Clinical Services.

The board had to go back to the drawing board after Ong'ech turned down the offer. In an interview with *Reject*, Ong'ech noted that this was a plum position that is enviable for many especially in a country where unemployment remains a big concern.

Even though picking individuals for such positions remains a major headache for the appointing authorities because of intense lobbying by various players who want to be considered for the revered positions, Ong'ech says there is more to a job than just perks.

"I requested the board to allow me to decline the appointment. I have a lot of respect to and thank the country's health leadership for believing in my ability to serve this great county," said Ong'ech without regret.

He said that the position had a lot of challenges from cartels in procurement and politicians.

"This is a job of managing a budget of almost KSh13 billion per year and 4,000 staff. It also has unlimited access to power and influence but I declined based on the past history of the previous chief executive officers who never had a good ending," he explained.

He cited an incident where a former CEO was allegedly picked from his house and shot.

His decision took many by surprise, sparking off a heated debate on social media platforms.

While some lauded him as principled and of high morals, others chided him for wasting a golden job opportunity. To some, the incident pointed to the intrigues at the referral hospital.

The hospital's chief gynaecologist is, however, unmoved by the criticism and says he would make a similar decision again under such circumstances.

Ong'ech styles himself as a stickler for probity and accountability in public governance.

"Others may relate my decision to being rigid but this appointment could be a graveyard for my promising career," he explained, adding that making a change at the hospital that is riddled with a lot of challenges is a tall order.

Ong'ech, who believes in hard work and honesty, said he will still serve in his capacity to improve the lives of women and children.

"In my opinion, service to our people is an honour and privilege which I continue doing even without being the CEO," he said.

However, in a statement, the board chairman Mark Bor said Thomas Mutie, would be the acting Chief Executive officer and Peter Masinde acting Clinical Services Director.