Nyarugenge Primary Court on Monday heard a case in which a court bailiff is accused of using derogatory language against a woman with severe short stature, with prosecutors seeking a two-month prison sentence, a fine and damages.

The Nyarugenge Primary Court is expected to deliver its final ruling on June 11.

Prosecutors allege that attorney and professional court bailiff Aline Munyakaragwe insulted Nelly Ingabire, also known as Mignonne, using degrading terms related to her disability, including in public. The prosecution is seeking a two-month prison sentence, a fine of 200,000 Rwandan francs, and 10 million francs in compensation.

Ingabire, who lives in Nyarugenge District, told the court the remarks caused her emotional distress and affected her daily life, including her ability to work and interact socially. She said the insults were repeated in public and led others to use similar language toward her.

“He called me a ‘gikuri’… it affected me deeply because he said it in public, and people began calling me that too,” she said in testimony.

Rights advocates say the case highlights ongoing challenges in addressing discriminatory language toward people with disabilities. The Rwanda National Union of the Deaf and Other Persons with Disabilities (NUDOR) has called for stronger enforcement of existing laws.

Legal adviser Jean Baptiste Murema of NUDOR said derogatory labels based on disability amount to discrimination and should be prosecuted under existing legal frameworks.

Rwanda’s 2007 disability law guarantees equal rights for persons with disabilities and prohibits discrimination. The country’s penal code criminalizes discrimination based on disability, carrying penalties of five to seven years in prison and fines of up to 1 million francs in some cases.

The defendant denied the allegations in court, arguing there was no criminal intent and asking the court to dismiss the charges.

Rwanda’s Law No. 01/2007 on the protection of persons with disabilities guarantees equal rights and prohibits all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities.

Additionally, Law No. 68/2018 on offenses and penalties provides that discrimination based on disability is punishable by five to seven years in prison and a fine ranging from 500,000 to 1,000,000 Rwandan francs.

The Constitution of Rwanda also states that all citizens are equal before the law and prohibits discrimination based on disability.