

*By Jeje Muhinde;*

Four drivers have been jailed by Rwanda National Police for violating COVID-19 transport restrictions.

Gilbert Ruberintwari, a cab driver from Kayonza district in Eastern Province said he was stopped by traffic Police officers in Ntungwa on Tuesday, July 6, for transporting four passengers on his way.

Police has said that they intercepted four vehicles in Ntungwa on Tuesday, in Mwarire Sector along Kigali-Rwamagana highway, which were smuggling people to different destinations in the Eastern Province.

The drivers were showed to the media on Wednesday, July 7, at Rwamagana District Police Unit (DPU) in Kigabiro Sector before being taken into custody.

Among the four, Joel Habarurema, a cab driver from Kayonza said, "I had secured a movement permit to transport a customer to Kayonza District, but the client suspended the journey. Since I had a movement clearance, I decided to transport other people going to Kayonza but I was intercepted in Ntungwa. Each passenger was supposed to pay Rwf7,000 for the fares," said Habarurema.

Movements between the City of Kigali and other provinces, and movements between districts across the country are prohibited as part of the recent Cabinet directives to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Police spokesperson, CP John Bosco Kabera said that the drivers had 14 people on board, who were being smuggled to different destinations in Rwamagana, Kayonza, Gatsibo and Nyagatare districts.

He added that the drivers had used the movement clearance permit contrary to the original intended purpose. The CP has warned drivers against abusing the movement permit and using it in prohibited services.

"Some of the suspects are cab drivers while other had secured the movement permit for genuine purposes but in the process decided to take advantage and use their vehicles to smuggle people out of Kigali to Rwamagana, Kayonza, Gatsibo and Nyagatare, which violates the Cabinet directives meant to prevent the spread of Covid-19 from one place to another," said CP Kabera.

He added that Police officers on road are there to enforce the directives and warned anyone, who attempts to undermine the government instructions and misusing the movement permit in particular.

“Everyone must adhere to the directives to save lives rather than asking for forgiveness after deliberate violations,” CP Kabera said.

COVID-19 infections have increased to 44,279 in Rwanda as of July 8. The Ministry of Health has reported that 16 people have succumbed to COVID-19 bringing the death toll to 507.

The deceased include seven women aged 91 (from Ngororero district), 73, 58 (Rubavu), 61, 36, 19 (Kigali), 58 (Musanze) and three men aged 73, 62, 44 (Rubavu), 71 (Ngororero), 69, 35 (Musanze), 59 (Nyagatare) 52, 47 from Kigali city.

The statement released last night shows that 760 have caught the virus while 816 recovered becoming the highest number of recoveries in one day.

A total of 392,003 people have been vaccinated since Rwanda began countrywide inoculation programme on 5th March 2021.