

Investigation into campus disturbances

ACADEMIC grievances at the University of Nairobi, which early this week resulted in disturbances at the campus culminating in the closure of the university indefinitely last Tuesday, will be investigated by the university administration in consultation with the Government, the Registrar, Mr. S. W. Karanja, announced last night.

He announced a special meeting of the University Council is to be convened tomorrow. But he gave no indication when the university would reopen.

In a lengthy Press statement, Mr. Karanja denied claims that the university administration had not made enough attempts to hold a dialogue with the students, and that it had been over-hasty in using the police.

He said the administration knew the majority of the students were law abiding and

were anxious to sit for their examination.

"It is obviously our hope and intention that the current crisis be resolved speedily and the university normal functions restored," he said.

Listing some of the attempts made by the administration to calm the situation, Mr. Karanja said: "Contrary to the impression given, continued dialogue has been maintained between the administration and the students.

"On February 19 a special Faculty Board of Architecture met to discuss, among other things, student proposals in regard to the current Architectural curriculum.

"On February 20, after students had mobbed and stoned the Architecture building, a meeting was held between the students and the deputy vice-chancellor, Prof. Mungai, the deputy registrar and the dean of students.

"On February 21, the re-

gistrar and a representative of the Ministry of Education, with the deputy registrar and dean of students, met the chairman and secretary of the Architectural Students' Association and two of their colleagues.

"On February 22, the dean of Architecture met with representatives of the Architecture students and two other students," Mr. Karanja said.

He added that on the day the examinations were expected to be resumed, the registrar addressed the students.

Mr. Karanja said the university had "consistently held that the legitimate students' concern with the question of curriculum will be looked into through the proper channels; that the termination of appointments of members of staff is a prerogative of the council and university administration; that the curriculum and examinations laid down in the Statutes must

be adhered to until constitutionally changed."

The university has also held that the Faculty of Architecture can only produce architects to the extent that there are qualified candidates applying for admission into the faculty, he added.

With regard to alleged mass failures in the Faculty of Architecture Mr. Karanja said in the last two years the pass rate had been 86 per cent and 73 per cent respectively.

The university did not, however, "favour the suggestion that these statistics should be viewed on a racial basis" since all are Kenyan students sponsored by the Kenya Government.

The registrar said the police were called only after students had "manhandled one of the professors and torn up the examination papers and had refused to disperse the vicinity of the examination area."

"Indeed," the police did not

come until after fighting broke out between the Faculty of Commerce students engaged in examinations and the pickets who were out to stop the continuation of their examinations," he claimed.

He described as "exaggerated" reports about casualties during the disturbances.

"Our dean of students, an academic member of staff and our medical officer have investigated this thoroughly and have reported only two injuries, the most serious of which is a student who broke his leg in jumping out of the central catering unit," Mr. Karanja claimed.

He concluded: The university reiterates that any academic grievances will be investigated by the university in consultation with the Government."

• See "Unions hit out . . .", Page 5.