

Gen. Elly Tumwine
Minister For Security
Kampala -Uganda.

Handwritten signature and date
18th/05/2020

Dear Gen. Tumwine,

Petition to prevail over Kiryandongo District Security Committee overlooking COVID-19 Directives that halted all land evictions.

We, the undersigned organisation, call upon your office as minister for security to exercise your powers to investigate and take punitive actions against Kiryandongo district security committee members that are undermining government's COVID-19 directives on land evictions.

The community of more than 30,000 people that have lawfully occupied about 10,000 acres of land before 1937 in Kiryandongo district, is facing violent and forceful evictions, intimidation, harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention being perpetrated by security personnel and laborers of investors under the supervision of Kiryandongo Resident District Commissioner Peter Debele and Kiryandongo District Police Commander Bakeleke Joseph. This is contrary to the law and the directive issued by the Lands Minister, Betty Kanya on the 16th day of April 2020 halting evictions during COVID-19 lockdown period.

The two primary members of the district security committee as well as their subordinates are colluding with Agilis Partners Ltd, Great Season Company Limited, Kiryandongo Sugar Limited, and businessman Mwesigye Reuben to dispossess poor communities and deprive them of rights to food, shelter and other basic needs especially during this difficult time.

The community affected by forced evictions have three categories depending on how they settled on the land being grabbed. The first category is of those who were born on that land since 1935. The second category comprises those that settled on the land during and after civil wars, including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which lasted for 2 decades in Northern Uganda. The third category is that which was settled on the same piece of land by the government in 2011 through the Nyamalebe Landless Association.

As you are aware, these companies are implementing farming projects in the area by carrying out forced evictions without due regard to the victims' fundamental human rights. The evictions are not preceded by court orders and due processes.

The evictions are devoid of prior, prompt, adequate and fair compensation contrary to Article 26 of the 1995 Uganda Constitution.

More than two dozen families have had their houses demolished and unknown number of acres of maize, cassava, and other food crops plowed by tractors and victim families have been blocked from opening cases against companies, security personnel and laborers.

The district security committee has stopped all administrative units of Police in Kiryandongo from recording complaints of the forced evictions regarding torture, assault, malicious damage to property and other transgressions of the evictions. The biased Kiryandongo Police only receives, records and investigates complaints of the evictors. The police is siding with the evictors and participating in the evictions.

Destruction of properties and plowing families' gardens continue to take place in community as some of the families such as **Baruma Sipriano, Alias Wanjala, Mwawula Fred, Ramu Ndahimana, Majid Olaro, Isingoma David, Martin Haweka, Bumali Stephen, Munyansia Martin, Luholere Lawrence, Evelyn Ndege, Agarubanda Emmanuel, Anna Ndege, Shukuru Jackson, Erias Wanzala, Karegeya Wilson, William Katusiime, Niko Sirasi, Komakech Francis Aol, Mukasafari Joyce, Kabayo George and Lucy Akot** lost their food plantation to companies with unmistakable collusion of police officers led by **DPC Bakeleke and RDC Debele**

However, a few cases that have been opened at Kiryandongo central police have not been attended to and their perpetrators are enjoying their freedom. The victims whose cases were opened include; **Byaruhanga John, Okot Lucy and Katusiime William.**

While other members including **Godfrey Ssebisolo, Erias Wanzala, Stella Aчитeng, Byaruhanga John, Otyaluk David Richard, Olupot James and Fred Mwawula** were arrested and subjected to harassment, violent attacks, torture and intimidation by security agents and workers of the said companies.

This is, therefore, to request for your immediate intervention in the illegal actions and/or omissions of the above mentioned companies and security officers. The intervention should especially include:

- Stopping the said Companies and its workers from colluding with district security committee to dispossess people, assault, torture them and maliciously damage their property besides other transgressions,

• Investigate and punish/discipline the culprits especially the **DPC, Bakaleke Joseph**, and **RDC Debele** as well as their subordinates that are the mastermind of the forced, illegal eviction and attendant crimes, and

• Protecting the community from losing the little food left, forced eviction, torture and assault by the said culprits including the Kiryandongo Police led by the **DPC, Bakaleke Joseph** and **RDC Debele Peter**.

Witness Radio Organisation is a registered not for profit organisation that advocate for human rights in development.

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'W' followed by a horizontal line and a smaller signature below it.

Wokulira Geoffrey Ssebagala
Team Leader
Witness Radio Organisation

C.C. Minister of lands, Housing and Urban Development

C.C. Inspector General of Police