

Govt asked to intervene in Mubende eviction case

MUBENDE

By Lawrence Mulondo

Makerere University lawyers have asked the Government to intervene in a land case where over 4,000 people in Mubende district were evicted.

On August 18, 2001, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) stormed the villages of Kitemba, Luwunga, Kijunga and Kiryamakobe in Mubende where they evicted 4,000 people from the land that they knew as their home.

The eviction left three people dead, dozens injured as well as houses and crops destroyed.

The over 400 families, who were evicted from 11.6 square miles of land in Mubende district, are now refugees in neighbouring villages.

The lawyers, under their umbrella organisation of Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC), led by Arthur Nsereko, in a press conference held on Friday at Makerere Guesthouse advised the Government to ensure that the proposed land amendment is done in the interest of people's rights, especially those that are unfairly evicted from their land.

Nsereko said PILAC filed a case in court, asking the Government for guidelines concerning land



Falk, Valentine Hategekimana of FIAN and Baleke during the press conference on Friday. Photo by Lawrence Mulondo

evictions.

"There is hope that those guidelines, once set, will prevent such cases from happening again," he said.

Nsereko said the land from which people were evicted by the Government in 2001 without compensation was leased to Kaweri Coffee Plantation Limited, a subsidiary of the Neumann KaffeeGruppe.

Peter Baleke, the chairperson of the evictees, said they formed their umbrella body, 'Wake Up and Fight for Your Right Madudu Group' and also hired lawyers.

They later in 2002 took the Government and Kaweri Coffee Plantation Limited to the High Court for evicting them.

Baleke said the High Court at Nakawa, presided over by Judge Anup Singh Choudry, in 2013 ruled

BETWEEN THE LINES:

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in their favour and asked them to go back to their land. However, Kaweri Coffee Plantation Limited filed an appeal protesting the way the case was handled.

At the Court of Appeal, Judge Faith Mwendha ordered that the case be returned to the High Court and be handled by another judge.

Since then, Baleke said, the High Court has never allocated any judge to handle their case, leaving them worried that their case file might get 'lost in court corridors'.

According to Gertrud Falk, the co-ordinator at FIAN Uganda, an organisation offering support to the Mubende evictees, said the situation is worrying.

"The biggest number of them are old people, who cannot do hard work for survival. Problems like poverty, malnutrition among children, HIV/AIDs and illiteracy are on the rise as a result of the eviction," Falk said.

Muntu warns army, Police

GULU

By Arnest Tumwesige

The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party president has warned uniformed men against being used to violate people's rights, saying there is a law that will catch up with them.

Addressing the media at Pearl Afrique Hotel in Gulu municipality, (rtd) Maj. Gen. Mugisha Muntu said it is unfortunate that some individuals in the Government are using the Police and army to disenfranchise people of their rights.

He warned the Police and army against any involvement in the Omoro elections by harassing voters today.

"Any Police or army officer in a uniform that has been bought by taxpayers' money is special and must act professionally," Muntu said.

He also said the decision by President Yoweri Museveni and Gen. Jeje Odong, the internal affairs minister, to back Gen. Kale Kayihura, the Inspector General of Police, not to appear before the court is against the law.

Reacting to Museveni's statement while in Omoro last week on the failure by the Opposition to deliver, Muntu said the Opposition hardly has any resources to set up infrastructure like roads and electricity.

He said the National Resistance Movement party has been able to register slight progress because it uses taxpayers' money which does not come from its treasury.