

## **OIL REFINERY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION; KABAAL-BUSERUKA, HOIMA**

November 8, 2017

### **Open letter to the presidents of Uganda and Tanzania: You must do more to involve citizens in oil sector processes**

#### **Mistakes in previous resettlement process must also be avoided**

Your Excellencies,

Greetings from the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), an association of families whose land was acquired by the government of Uganda in 2012 for Uganda's proposed oil refinery and some of which families are still living in the refinery area.

For some time now, ORRA has been aware that both Your Excellencies plan on visiting Hoima district, where we reside.

In a November 3, 2017 media release, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed this visit and noted that Your Excellency, John Pombe Magufuli's, will visit Uganda between November 9 and 11, 2017.

The Ministry noted that both you and H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni will, among other activities, lay markstones for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) in Luzinga village and in Hoima on November 9 and 11, 2017 respectively.

We have witnessed the activities undertaken for your visit in Hoima and we read the above media release with a heaviness of heart that no citizen of any country should ever have to feel.

Why? Are we against the developments being undertaken in the oil sector in Uganda?

Not at all, Your Excellencies.

However, the preparations for your visit provided one of many indicators that the oil sector in Uganda may not be developed for the benefit of the people. They also pointed to the government of Uganda's callousness to our suffering.

Why do we say this?

For over a month before your impending visit, a number of activities including preparatory meetings by Hoima district and the grading of roads among others have been undertaken in Hoima and the refinery area.

While the above activities were ongoing, no formal communication was made to us (ORRA) about what the activities were for. We were only able to find out about both Your Excellencies' visit through our informal networks. We hear that television notices were run regarding the visit but with many of us lacking television sets, we, who are key stakeholders in the oil sector were left out.

We were further burdened with heavy police deployment where we live in the refinery area. Old officers from the Oil and Gas Police were redeployed elsewhere while new ones were brought to the area.

These police officers created such fear in us! Without adequate information on what was happening in our area and with a high presence of police officers, children, mothers and indeed some men thought that we were going to be unconstitutionally evicted as has happened elsewhere including in Rwamutonga, Hoima.

The above left us wondering: Who is the oil and gas sector in Uganda being developed for? Per Article 244 of the Uganda Constitution, the government of Uganda owns and controls minerals including oil on behalf of Ugandans.

Why then as persons whose land was acquired by government –but are yet to be compensated– were we not formally notified of the Your Excellencies' impending visit? Why did we have to live under heavy police deployment and in fear? Can an uninformed people who have been intimidated claim to have a stake in the oil sector?

The answer is a clear and loud no. This is extremely wrong and must be urgently remedied by the government of Uganda.

Further, as we noted, over 20 families belonging to ORRA are yet to be compensated while over 70 others are waiting for the government of Uganda to fulfill promises made to us in the 2012 Resettlement Action Plan for the Refinery Project in order to be relocated.

The promises made to us include providing us with land bought built on a case-by-case basis, land titles and houses for our families. The government of Uganda backtracked on all these promises and is planning on resettling us in a terribly squeezed camp in Hoima that is unsuitable to our lifestyles.

Other commitments include constructing good murram roads to enable economic activities, building a nursery school to give our children a good start in life and providing us with water, electricity and other social services to enable us live like other human beings. The government of Uganda is yet to fulfill these promises too!

Your Excellencies, as we have waited, families have broken down with financially poor fathers who were refused from growing perennial cash crops by the Ministry of Energy since 2012 abandoning their children and wives.

The abandoned children have been ignored by their own government in the provision of education. The children have not gone to school for over five years.

Mothers have done their best to soothe the depressed husbands and children but even they have fallen short. With anxieties about where they will find the next meal for their families in addition to healthcare for the young ones, they have done little to lift the burden of their families.

As both Your Excellencies plan on developing the EACOP, we are afraid that other citizens could suffer as we have. This must not happen.

**We therefore recommend the following:**

- That the government of Uganda abandons its plans to amend the Uganda Constitution to allow itself to acquire citizens' property prior to compensation in case of disputes. We have suffered because of delayed and inadequate compensation, which the government of Uganda is proposing.
- That both your governments commit to promptly, fairly and adequately compensate persons whose land will be acquired for the EACOP.
- That the government of Uganda does more to involve Ugandans in operations in the oil sector.
- That the government of Uganda compensates and relocates us immediately.

**Innocent Tumwebaze,  
Chairperson, ORRA**