

June 2024; Issue 6

IMPUNITY AND BRUTALITY: YOUTH ACTIVISTS SUE POLICE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



Youth activists during and after their meeting with lawyers to discuss human rights violations in Uganda and efforts to stop the impunity of police. The youth asked the lawyers to help them sue the police officers involved in human rights violations.

In this newsletter:

- Victims of police brutality must get justice
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- Lobbying
- In the media
- Upcoming events

Dear reader, welcome to AFIEGO's June 2024 newsletter.

In the month of June 2024, AFIEGO and its partners commenced efforts to document the victims of police harassment, intimidation, arrests, detentions, and other threats to human rights defenders and activists.

The primary goal of this documentation is to identify those who violate human rights and then use that information to support the citizens whose rights have been violated to take action against those who abuse their rights so as to get redress through legal processes.

On June 18, 2024, a draft report on human rights violations was presented and discussed by over 30 participants, including youth activists, leaders from oil-host communities, lawyers, civil society leaders, and others.

The participants noted that since 2021, over 192 human rights defenders and activists have been directly harassed, intimidated, arrested, and detained illegally. Unfortunately, to date, these victims have not received justice and those involved in

rights violations have never been punished.

The draft report also indicated that the majority of the victims are Ugandans who have risked their lives to oppose dangerous oil activities, including the proposed oil refinery, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), the Tilenga oil project, and other related projects.

Further, the meeting noted that between May and June 2024, over 58 human rights activists have arrested and detained illegally by the police.

The most recent incident occurred on June 26, 2024, when 30 **EACOP activists** participating in a peaceful demonstration were arrested.

The activists, including university students and community members, sought to petition the Chinese ambassador to halt funding for the EACOP project, citing grave environmental and social concerns.

The meeting concluded with a consensus that the victims of police brutality must urgently file cases in court against the identified police officers and government for human rights violations.

This legal action aims to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable and ensure that the victims get justice.

In our Word from CEO, we highlight the three (3) cases filed by the youth activists against the police officers and government for violating their rights including the rights to demonstrate, assemble, associate and others.

The cases were filed as part of efforts to restore citizens' dignity and stop the shrinking civic space in Uganda so that Ugandans who suffer injustice get redress.

The cases will ensure that those who violate the rights of Ugandans are held accountable for their actions.

Through this newsletter, we call upon all Ugandans and others who value and respect human and environmental rights to join the struggle to stop attacks on civil society and human rights defenders in general.

In addition, we bring you our **pictorial** section summarising the activities implemented by AFIEGO and our partners in June.

These activities include meetings between the lawyers and the victims of human rights violations, engagements with the EACOP-affected communities, a radio talk show on Uganda's Energy Transition (ET) plan, filing of three (3) cases against police officers, a meeting between lawyers and oil host communities in Buliisa district, and others.

In our **lobbying** section, we share some of the lobby and advocacy products that we disseminated in June.

Finally, in **the media section**, we bring four (4) of the newspaper articles written by our staff and partners that were published in the leading newspapers.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

Editorial team:

Rachael Amongin

Balach Bakundane

VICTIMS OF POLICE BRUTALITY MUST GET JUSTICE

Between June 18 and 27, 2024, a group of nine (9) youth human rights defenders and activists who are victims of police brutality filed three (3) lawsuits against the Attorney General and ten (10) police officers involved in human rights violations.

The police officers were sued in their individual capacities while the Attorney General was sued on behalf of the government.

The victims of police brutality are seeking for court declarations, orders and other reliefs including:

- That the police stop harassing, intimidating, arresting and detaining people during peaceful demonstrations.
- That police stop detaining suspects in police cells for more than 48 hours.
- That the government and police should compensate those who suffer human rights violations.
- That police and the government must respect and uphold the citizens' rights to freedom of movement, to protest, to assemble, associate and other rights.

WAY FORWARD

The plaintiffs and their lawyers have agreed to do the following to ensure that the above cases are heard and determined quickly:

- Petition the Chief Justice, the Deputy Chief Justice and the Principal Judge to ensure that the filed cases are fast-tracked in line with Article 126 of the Constitution.
- The lawyers will continue mobilising the Uganda Law Society and the East African Law Society to provide further legal support to the plaintiffs.
- The Uganda Human Rights Commission and government agencies responsible for human rights will be petitioned to ensure that the plaintiffs are not victims by the police officers who have been sued.
- The plaintiffs formed a taskforce to coordinate their struggles for human and environmental rights and access to justice for redress.
- Another case will be filed at the constitutional court to challenge the penal code provisions of common nuisance and others which are being used to violate the constitution.

By CEO

Pictorial of our activities

YOUTH UNDER STOPEACOP DEMONSTRATING IN DEMAND FOR A HALT OF OIL ACTIVITIES



A peaceful demonstration in Kampala where the youth were demanding for TotalEnergies to stop risky oil projects including the EACOP.

The youth want the company to stop oil activities due to their negative impacts on people, environment and others.

AFIEGO HOLDS A MEETING WITH SOME TILENGA OIL-AFFECTED PERSONS AND THEIR OBSERVERS TO DISCUSS THE EFFECTS OIL ACTIVITIES TO THE COMMUNITIES



AFIEGO held a meeting with the Tilenga oil-affected people and observers in Buliisa district to discuss the suffering of people in the area due to the actions of TotalEnergies and its sub-contractors.

The affected people have lost their land, experienced floods from the Central Processing Facility (CPF) operated by TotalEnergies and attacks from elephants driven out of the park by oil activities among others.

AFIEGO EMPOWERS CSO LEADERS ON HOW TO SAFELY OPERATE IN A SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE



On June 5, 2024, AFIEGO trained CSOs on how to operate in a hostile environment like Uganda.

The training equipped CSO leaders with strategies to deal with the threats of harassment, intimidation, arrests, detentions and others.

AFIEGO LAWYERS MEETING TILENGA OIL-AFFECTED PEOPLE IN BULIISA DISTRICT



On June 7, 2024, AFIEGO's external lawyers met some of the Tilenga oil PAPs to complete documents and collect evidence for cases at the Hoima high court and Court of Appeal plus one reference filed at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) at Arusha in Tanzania.

In June 2024, AFIEGO disseminated the lobbying and advocacy materials below.



June 10, 2024

COMMUNIQUE CALLING ON NEMA TO ENSURE THAT HOIMA SUGAR LTD RESTORES AND STOPS DESTROYING BUGOMA FOREST

Parliament and development partners should withhold funding to NEMA until the Bugoma forest restoration processes start.

1. We, youth and women from 34 villages around Bugoma Central Forest Reserve (CFR), congratulate the Government of Uganda (GoU), on joining the rest of the world today to celebrate World Environment Day.
2. The day is being celebrated under the theme, *Land restoration, desertification and drought resilience*. The theme is close to our hearts because Hoima Sugar Ltd and other parties started destroying Bugoma forest in 2021.
3. The forest is dear to us because as host communities, we used to enjoy benefits such as rainfall and good weather as well as access to clean water, herbs and fertile soils, thanks to the forest. We also engaged in beekeeping, and were excited by the possibility of jobs being created from Bugoma forest tourism opportunities such as chimpanzee trekking, bird watching, forest walks and others.
4. Unfortunately, in August 2020, the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) approved the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) report for Hoima Sugar Ltd's (HSL) Kyangwali Mixed Use Land project.
5. Through the approval, NEMA allowed HSL to grow sugarcane and set up an urban centre among other degrading activities in a forest that we hold dear and dear to our hearts. We were saddened by these events and since then, we have engaged in efforts including monitoring the forest, engaging our local leaders, using the media and petitioning the president among others to stop the destruction of our forest.
6. We have also engaged the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (MLHUD) starting in 2021 to open the Bugoma forest boundaries to stop HSL's encroachment on the forest.

Received by
Dyngong Tuba
10/06/2024
041437100
Speaker
etc

EACOP-AFFECTED PEOPLE'S NETWORK

05th/June/2024

To H.H. Xi Jinping,
The President, People's Republic of China
C/O: H.E. Zhang Lizhong,
Ambassador of China to Uganda,
Kampala (U).

RECEIVED BY
ANNISA NATHAN
02/06/2024

EACOP AND OTHER OIL PROJECT-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES' STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S SUPPORT FOR THE EACOP PROJECT

We are households that have been affected by the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP), Kingfisher and Tilenga oil projects in Uganda.

We have seen news¹ that in April 2024, Ambassador Xue Bing, the Chinese Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Affairs hand delivered a letter from the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, to Uganda's president, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

The letter, which was read by the Chinese Ambassador to Uganda, Mr. Zhang Lizhong, affirmed China's commitment to collaborating with Uganda to ensure the success of the EACOP project. News reports indicated that Uganda's top energy officials were to visit China at the end of April 2024 to discuss China's funding of the EACOP.

Indeed, on Friday May 17, 2024, the *Daily Monitor* published a news story, *Top energy technocrats in Beijing for pipeline talks*. Through the news story, the public was informed that top Ugandan government officials had travelled to Beijing to discuss financing of the EACOP by Chinese financial institutions. Reports have indicated that state institutions such as China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (SINOSURE) and banks such as the Export Import Bank of China² could provide financial support to the project. Further, the International Commercial Bank of China is acting as a financial advisor on the project³.

¹ New Vision; *Chinese President Xi expresses support for EACOP project*: https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/chinese-president-xi-expresses-support-for-ug-NV_185224
² The East African; *Uganda seeks Chinese funding for EACOP*: https://www.theeastafrican.co.ug/ta/business/uganda-seeks-chinese-funding-for-eacop-4382/06#concept_vignette
³ The Independent; *Govt not bothered about banks refusing to finance EACOP*: <https://www.independent.co.ug/govt-not-bothered-about-banks-refusing-to-finance-eacop/>

In June 2024, AFIEGO staff, research associates and youth champions wrote newspaper articles that were published in the leading newspapers. Some of the published articles are captured below.

LETTERS OF THE DAY

Embracing the green gospel in Africa's pearl

In the grand narrative of our continent's development, the green gospel is a beacon of hope. It is a message of sustainable growth, one that respects the rich natural resources that have made Africa the heartbeat of the world. As we stand on the cusp of a new era, it is imperative that we embrace this green gospel with the same passion and determination that we have shown in our quest for economic growth and social justice. The green gospel is not just a slogan; it is a way of life. It is a call to action, a call to protect our environment, to conserve our resources, and to build a sustainable future for ourselves and for generations to come. Let us embrace the green gospel with the same fervor and commitment that we have shown in our quest for progress and prosperity. For only in a green and sustainable Africa can we truly realize our dreams and aspirations for a better future.



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LETTERS

Illuminate importance of forest reserves to the economy



June 5 will be World Environment Day. The day is being celebrated under the theme, land restoration, and desertification and drought resilience. The theme is close to our hearts as Ugandans because they provide host communities with rainfall and good weather as well as access to clean water, herbs and fertile soils and a home for many species. Therefore this day is a reminder to countries to encourage awareness and action for the protection and restoration of all forests and other critical ecosystems, most especially Bugoma forest that is under a threat of destruction. It is noted that Bugoma forest reserve has been facing a lot of illegal logging, charcoal burners and others migrated to the villages and these have increased insecurity in the area. Bugoma central forest reserve is found in Kikuube District in western Uganda and it is an important ecosystem that provides a range of ecological, social and economic benefits to the local communities and the wider environment. More effort is needed to save this forest which is being threatened by the ongoing human activities. It is noted that in August, 2020, the government authorized Home Sugar Limited's activities in Bugoma forest reserve despite of the protestations from different actors. This left the residents unhappy because the forest from which they used to get free herbs and gives them rain is being destroyed. They are worried that if the approved restoration plan is not shared, the forest will not be restored and the destruction will continue, the government will also not be able to stop other encroachers and the entire forest will be destroyed. Early this year, the media reported that 800 hectares of the forest reserve was cut down by encroachers and the forest was turned into a plain area covered by large tracts of crops now occupying what used to be covered by trees and the area cannot be easily related to the forest, which left the state minister for Bunyoro affairs in a shock. From the findings, it is noted that the delayed release of the approved restoration plan of the Bugoma forest reserve which was for clearing the issues of land conflict, forest destruction and resource ownership, has increased the encroachments and degradation of the forest. Despite the people's efforts and engagements with the ministry and other responsible stakeholders at different levels on the urgent need to release the report to protect the forest and the rights of the host communities who purely depend on the forest for their livelihoods.

LETTERS Power Uganda: Ensure Reliable Electricity



Electricity is the backbone of modern development. It powers our homes, businesses, and industries, driving economic growth and social progress. In Uganda, access to reliable electricity is a fundamental need for all citizens. However, the current state of the power sector is a cause for concern. The country's electricity supply is often unreliable, with frequent power outages that disrupt daily life and hinder economic activities. This is primarily due to a combination of factors, including aging infrastructure, limited investment in new power generation capacity, and inefficient distribution networks. To ensure a reliable and sustainable electricity supply, the government must take decisive action. This includes investing in modern power generation technologies, such as renewable energy sources like solar and wind, and upgrading the transmission and distribution infrastructure. Additionally, strengthening regulatory frameworks and improving the efficiency of the power sector are crucial steps. The private sector can also play a significant role in financing and operating power projects, provided there is a clear and stable regulatory environment. Ensuring reliable electricity is not just a matter of convenience; it is a matter of economic survival and social justice. It is the foundation upon which a prosperous and modern Uganda can be built. The government must prioritize this issue and work in partnership with the private sector and international partners to address the challenges facing the power sector. Only through a concerted effort can we ensure that every Ugandan has access to the reliable electricity they need to thrive.

The media reported that a section of farmers in Kigezi sub region started to reclaim the wetlands to plant potatoes and other vegetables. The farmers are taking advantage of the May-September season to plant food in wetlands, despite a presidential directive which bans such activities. Wetlands are amazing natural water filtration systems which trap natural sediment and organic matter and filter out excess nutrients from rain and storm water runoff such as toxic metals and fertilisers from industrial and agricultural activities. It is noted that wetlands include some of the most productive ecosystems in the world, which are important because they host a vast array of biodiversity. It is the exclusive source of natural resources upon which rural economies depend on for their livelihoods, such as fishing, agriculture, and tourism. However, much wetlands are among the most important natural resources and being among some of the world's most valuable and diverse ecosystems, they are disappearing slowly but surely. This is due to increased population, land use change and weather variation. Wetlands are full of biodiversity serving as a home of plant and animal species including many that are endangered, such as birds, amphibians, fish and all sorts of mammals and insects that rely upon wetlands for survival and it is noted that a quarter of these animals and plants which take wetlands as their home are at risk of becoming extinct, which is unfortunate. Therefore, the government needs to put in place sustainable and effective conservation measures, such as through community-based and educational initiatives on radio, social media and local newspapers to disseminate information about the ecological importance of wetlands, the benefits of preserving the ecosystem and the necessity of demarcation. This will empower the community to actively participate in the long-term management and protection of the wetlands without any resistance of the demarcation exercises hence increasing the sustainability of the wetland management efforts.

LETTERS The importance of wetland conservation



The Uganda Gazette on wetlands, titled "The National Environmental Declaration on Wetlands Notice, 2023" is a legal document issued by the government in September 2023. This document was launched on World Wetlands Day 2023 and serves as a crucial step towards safeguarding wetlands. Wetlands are not just beautiful landscapes; they are vital ecosystems that provide a wide range of services, from water purification to carbon sequestration. They are also home to a vast array of biodiversity, including many endangered species. The declaration recognizes the ecological importance of wetlands and the need to protect them from degradation and destruction. It sets out clear guidelines for the management and use of wetlands, ensuring that they are preserved for the benefit of current and future generations. The declaration also emphasizes the role of the private sector and the community in wetland conservation. It encourages investment in wetland restoration and sustainable use, while also imposing strict penalties for illegal activities that threaten wetland health. The declaration is a landmark moment in Uganda's environmental history, signaling a commitment to the protection and sustainable management of these vital ecosystems. It is a call to action for all Ugandans to work together to ensure that our wetlands remain healthy and productive for generations to come.

Upcoming events

July 5, 2024; Kampala: Petitioning the president to stop deployment of a second oil rig in Murchison Falls National Park (MFNP)

July 8, 2024; Hoima: Hearing of the oil refinery case that is challenging unfair compensation practices by government

July 9-11, 2024; Greater Masaka: Interviews with local communities and other stakeholders on the tourism potential of Greater Masaka

July 11, 2024; Kampala: Dissemination of research report on the impacts of the Tilenga oil project activities on Murchison Falls National Park

July 12, 2024; Bunyoro and Greater Masaka: Radio talkshows to strengthen communities' understanding of the compliance requirements under the EACOP and related oil projects' ESIA reports

July 18-19, 2024; Hoima and Greater Masaka: Community meetings to collect views on the draft Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation

July 28, 2024 Kampala: Distribution of brochures on the implications of the European Union's Critical Raw Materials Act to women and youth groups

About Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO)

AFIEGO is a non-profit company limited by guarantee that was incorporated under Uganda's Companies Act. AFIEGO undertakes public policy research and advocacy to influence energy policies to benefit the poor and vulnerable. Based in Kampala-Uganda, the non-profit company was born out of the need to contribute to efforts to turn Africa's clean energy potential into reality and to ensure that the common man and woman benefits from this energy boom. Through lobbying, research and community education, AFIEGO works with communities and leaders to ensure that clean energy resources are utilised in a way that promotes equitable development, environmental conservation and respect for human rights.

Our Vision

A society that equitably uses clean energy resources for socio-economic development

Our Mission

To promote energy policies that benefit poor and vulnerable communities