

URGENT ACTION

HUNDREDS LEFT HOMELESS BY FORCED EVICTIONS

Ugandan soldiers have been forcibly evicting communities in the Apaa area in northern Uganda since 15 March. So far, more than 250 homes have been burnt and destroyed, leaving hundreds of people, including children homeless. The evictions have been carried out by the authorities in violation of the constitution and international human rights law.

Since 15 March, **hundreds of people in Oyanga, Luru, Acholi Ber and Gaji villages in Apaa area**, northern Uganda, have been left homeless after forced evictions by members of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF). This has resulted in hundreds of people, including children, spending nights in the bush during the ongoing rainy season. The latest forced evictions took place on 11 May. So far, soldiers have burnt down more than 250 homes, destroyed property and beat up villagers. According to reports from members of the affected community, armed soldiers beat them up, burnt their food and crops and threatened them with further violence in a bid to intimidate people into leaving their homes.

According to media reports, the forced evictions are being carried out at the behest of the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the National Forestry Authority who allege that the villagers are occupying Zoka Forest reserve and East Madi Game Reserve.

The forced evictions are in contravention of an injunction issued by Gulu High Court in February 2018 stopping any evictions until a case filed by some of the villagers regarding the boundary dispute is heard and determined. The evictions have also been carried out without the safeguards required under international human rights law. Further, as a state party to the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), the Ugandan authorities should refrain from, prohibit and prevent arbitrary displacement of populations and provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons without discrimination of any kind.

Please write immediately in English or your own language:

- Calling on the Ugandan authorities to stop the forced evictions immediately;
- Urging them to provide emergency assistance to the victims of the forced evictions, including emergency shelter and access to food and sanitation, and guaranteeing their safe return to their homes;
- Calling on them to conduct an impartial, thorough and transparent investigation into the forced evictions and reports of violence by the UPDF and take necessary steps under law to hold those responsible to account.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 JUNE 2018 TO:

President

Yoweri Museveni
State House Office
Entebbe
P.O. Box 25497
Kampala, Uganda
Fax: +256414235462
Email:
molly.kamukama@statehouse.go.ug
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of defence

Adolf Mwesige
Ministry of Defence
Mbuya
Chwa II
P.O. Box 3798
Kampala, Uganda
Fax: 0414222812
Email: mod.ps@defence.go.ug
Salutation: Honourable

And copies to:

Uganda Wildlife Authority
Sam Mwandha
Plot 7, Kira Road, Kamwokya
P. O. Box 3530
Kampala, Uganda
Fax: N/A
Email: info@ugandawildlife.org

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

HUNDREDS LEFT HOMELESS BY FORCED EVICTIONS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Apaa has been subject to territorial disputes for decades. The residents of Apaa were forced to flee during the Lord's Resistance Army war and settle in camps outside their villages. In 2002, while still in camps, parliament gazetted the area as a nature reserve to promote tourism in the north. Now Apaa is part of a boundary dispute between Adjumani District, which has designated the area a wildlife conservancy and forest reserve, and Amuru District, which claims it as community ancestral land.

On 10 February 2012, the High Court in Gulu issued a temporary injunction which instructed Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and its agents or servants to stop "further eviction, destruction, confiscation or conversion and or interfering with the land rights, occupation and uses of land belonging to the [local communities] in the areas of Pabbo and Apaa in Amuru district, pending the determination of the main suit". Despite this, UPDF soldiers continued to forcibly evict the community and occupy the area. They blocked the communities from rebuilding the destroyed livelihoods following the violent evictions. As of 2018, some of the evicted people relocated to other areas of Amuru district, while those with no alternative places to relocate returned to the contested land. The latest court injunction was issued in February 2018.

Rachel* (not her real name), from Luru 'A' village in Apaa, described how armed soldiers surrounded her home on the evening of 1 May. After asking her to bring all her possessions out of her three huts, they burned the huts down and stole the possessions. Rachel says the men hit her twice and told her that if they returned to find her still there, they would kill her. They then photographed her. Rachel spent one night in the bush but returned to the land on which her home had stood the next day. She told Amnesty International she has nowhere else to go.

Victor* (not his real name), from Acholi Ber, said he was subjected to three separate forced evictions between March and May. All five huts in Victor's family compound were burnt in the first attack on 15 March. They managed to rebuild four of the huts, but soldiers returned in April and burnt them down again. On 2 May, seven UPDF soldiers returned to the village to find Victor sleeping in an iron-roofed shelter normally used for farming equipment. He says the officers demanded to know what he was "still doing here" and then severely beat him using the butt of a gun and a hammer, laughing as he tried to escape. Victor told Amnesty International that he has difficulty walking due to the beating.

Name: Residents of Apaa

Gender m/f: Both

UA: 96/18 Index: AFR 59/8409/2018 Issue Date: 15 May 2018