Over 20 L/stone families face eviction from Zesco houses

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A CHINESE attempt to get land close to the Victoria Falls is to affect over 20 families residing in Zesco houses.

In January 2017, senior chief Mukuni thwarted attempts by State House to offer the curio market at the Victoria Falls to a named Chinese to erect a Spin-Sational Ferris Wheel, similar to that at Disneyland in the United States of America.

An eviction notice was availed to The Mast dated April 29, 2020, signed by Zesco’s director of legal services McRobby Chiwela and copied to the power utility’s managing director Victor Mundende, director power generation, director human resources and the two labour movements namely POGAWUZ and NESAWU.

According to the notice, the reason for the eviction of the tenants was that the houses are in the Musi-oa-Tunya National Park.

“NOTICE OF EVICTION: Kindly be informed that the area housing the house you reside in is a national park, namely the Musi-oa-Tunya National Park not suitable for human habitation in terms of the Zambia Wildlife Act Number 14 of 2015. We are therefore giving you three months’ notice to vacate the house at hand with effect from 7 May 2020,” Chiwale said.

He added that the lease agreement allowing tenants to occupy the said houses had also expired, hence the three months’ notice was just a humanitarian gesture.

But several tenants at the Victoria Falls Power Station housing unit said some Chinese were recently seen inspecting the area where the houses are.

“It is not true that it is because we are in a national park, they want to give the land to a Chinese investor. The only wildlife we are associated with here are monkeys. We are not in any corridor of either elephants or buffalos. The reason is just a smoke screen to allow the Chinese to get the land and build something as close to the Victoria Falls as possible,” said one tenant.

“What surprised us is the fact that out of about 60 housing units, only 22 are targeted. Does it mean that only these are supposedly in the national park and not fit for human habitation?”

And a wildlife department senior officer who spoke on condition of anonymity said there has never been any concern raised by the department over the housing units at the power station.

“It is worrying that Zesco has to drag us into this. If there was any correspondence from us, why did they not attach it to the eviction notice? Also, strangely, this letter giving notice of eviction is not copied to us. Mind you, some of the houses in the area in question belong to us and we have never told them that the area is not suitable for human habitation, so I would not be surprised to see the Chinese take over the said land after the houses are demolished,” the wildlife officer said.

The officer added that the area was actually not on the department’s red zones with regard to human-animal conflict.

“If you look at the incidences of human-animal conflict that have claimed several human lives, Victoria Falls Power Station residential area is not on the list. Actually, we would rather have houses in Dambwa Site and Service demolished because the people in that area actually pose a great deal of danger to themselves and wildlife,” said the officer.

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