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Museveni's double standards?

SUNDAY, 06 MAY 2012 08:53 BY MUBATSI ASINJA HABATI



Mubatsi Asinja Habati

Why is President allowing Madhvani sugar but blocking Tirupati?

In December last year, the cultural leader of the Baruali, Ssabaruali Mwogezzi Butamanya, petitioned President Yoweri Museveni after Tirupati Development (U) Limited, a real estate investment company moved to evict 3,000 people hailing from Lwabyata sub-county in Nakasongala District. The investor had bought a four-square mile piece of land covering 3 parishes of Nalukonge, Kansira and Kikoge from one Charles Musisi with the objective of establishing a US\$40 million sugar factory. Tirupati would inject Shs 96 billion in the sugar factory.

The Ssabaruali's petition followed threats by 300 residents of the affected area to pitch camp at State House Entebbe in protest of their impending eviction without compensation. The 3000 tenants accused Musisi, their landlord, of selling the piece of land to Tirupati after soliciting money from them on promise that they would get land titles. They never got the land titles but eviction notices. The tenants demanded compensation from Tirupati before they could leave the land but the investor did not agree with the tenants on compensation.

Uganda was recently hit by sugar crisis and the prices for sugar hit a Shs 7,000 mark per kilo after the three main sugar factories failed to meet the demand. The government called for investors in the sector and Tirupati was among the eight new licensed sugar manufacturing companies. In November last year Miraj Barot, the Marketing Director of Tirupati Development Uganda, said that sugar production would start this year with the capacity of 2,500 tons per day and 30,000 jobs created.

However, having secured the land and ready to start business, President Museveni has stopped the Tirupatis from proceeding with the sugar factory in Nakasongala because it would lead to eviction of many people. When The Independent approached Tirupati Development (U) for details, the owners did not want to discuss the subject.

But Museveni's blocking of the Tirupati sugar factory project comes at a time the Madhvani Group has the backing of his government to evict people of Amuru district from 40,000 hectares of land to pave way for the Amuru Sugar Works factory. Initially the people of Amuru and Acholi region opposed the giveaway of their land to the sugar barons without due process of the law. Recently, their opinion appears divided. There is still, however, no clear compensation roadmap and the Madhvani is getting free land unlike in Nakasongala where Tirupati is buying. Not even the undressing of Amuru women before the Madhvani officials in protest of eviction from their own land appears to make the government change its approach to land in the north.

Questions are being asked why allow a sugar factory to an investor given free land and block another who has bought land. In all cases people are being displaced. But the reason given to block the Nakasongala sugar factory is that it will displace about 3000 residents.

On April 4, when the Madhvanis signed a memorandum of understanding with the Amuru district leaders, an elderly woman stoop up and told RDC Milton Odongo who was representing the district and the government that she would undress in protest.

Odongo retorted: "I have seen naked bodies of brown women, what will your nude dark body change?" the old woman sat down and kept quiet. Weeks later women undressed in protest of the land giveaway as they have no alternative area to go but their pleas were not listened to. Some women went ahead and stripped in protest of the giveaway of their land and resisting eviction. But it appears it does not matter how many will be displaced in Amuru since the government has said it is okay for people to be evicted even without compensation or alternative resettlement. Why?

Rewarding friends

Museveni recently revealed that the NRM and the Madhvani Group share a long history since the Group's founder helped in financing his bush war. So is this reward time? Some civil society organisations are interpreting such evictions without addressing the concerns of the local owners as land grabbing in the name of development. The Food Rights Alliance (FRA), a consortium of over 60 NGOs, is advising that government should "take full responsibility as the chief custodian of land in Uganda, and ensure its optimal usage for the equitable benefit of all citizen and ensure that investments are to the benefit of the country and that Ugandans do not lose land to unjustifiable investments," says Agnes Kirabo the coordinator of FRA.

According to Gulu woman MP Betty Acan, land grabbing is worse in areas that have faced war and displacement. Acan says the vice has been more pronounced in Amuru district where people in Apar sub-county are being evicted to pave way for a tourism investor. She adds that the UPDF was surveying 16 sq. miles of land in Agago and already the Madhvanis have been allocated 40,000 hectares in Amuru.

"Resettlement has coincided with investors coming to the north with their moneys. The law is not being used in giving out this land. People with money bypass the real owners of land. They approach State House and come with eviction orders," Acan says. "Uninhabited land is not free. That land is communally owned and protected under our laws. The fact that my land is not registered does not mean I don't own it."

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Tribalism - pure and simple

written by Fred, May 07, 2012

What those who are wondering why M7 can disregard cries of the Acholi and then suddenly heed those of the people in Nakasongola don't realize is the tribal make up of the areas! The Acholi have persistently resisted the NRM manoeuvrings to rig elections in the area and have also voted opposition, so why would they be belated to the NRM. The Amuru land give away is their punishment! On the other hand if you look at the Nakasongola you will realize that the dominant tribe in the area is now a new entrant, people of Rwandese origin not the Baruuili as they would have you believe. The Baruuili live in uncontested areas. The truth is that your own child is more endearing than a neighbor's



farmer

written by charles oriuku, May 21, 2012

If Museveni is appeasing madhivan, because they financed his bush war then he should surrender his own land. after all he grabbed power from the Acholi. what a paradox. you fought and toppled government which was headed by a Acholi and you want to reward your financier with the property of the people you fought is redulous and an acceptable. 😞😞😞😞😞😞



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