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Pujehun Diasporas Reject Land Deal

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Citizens of Sorogbeima and Makpele Chiefdoms, Pujehun District residing in North America and the United Kingdom have out rightly rejected the terms of the land agreement between Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/ West Africa Agricultural #2 Limited and the two chiefdoms.

Sheikh Tunis, a Makpele citizen who is based in New York told Global Times that the two chiefdoms were lured in to signing an agreement for which they were not legally represented much unlike the agricultural company.

Making reference to the Press Release which the citizens of the two chiefdoms based in the Diaspora have issued, Sheikh Tunis also lamented that as part of the agreement, the company will ask land owners out of the piece of land in question as and when the company pleases.

He said the compensation offered for the land as contained in the agreement is inadequate and that the Diasporas were making their voices heard in the hope that the people of the two chiefdoms will benefit more.

The press release however indicated that the Diaspora would partake in development discussions with the company.

PRESS RELEASE

Citizens of Sorogbeima and Makpele Chiefdoms Residing in USA/UK position on the Land Lease Agreement between Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited and Citizens of both Sorogbeima and Makpele chiefdoms Pujehun District, Sierra Leone, West Africa.

While we, in the Diaspora from the two Chiefdoms respect our relatives in both Sorogbeima and Makpele chiefdoms, it is also our collective responsibilities to point out to them the arms length of this land deal Agreement. And by extension, we have organized ourselves to assist them in this venture.

Firstly, an agreement of this nature will not consummate without proper legal representations on both sides. But that was not the case. Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited had full legal representation, while our people were left to fain for themselves, by falsely misrepresenting to them that they



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were only appending their signatories on a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) document. And in fact, the document has now turned out to be a legally binding Land Lease Agreement. This is the consensus of all those who were lured into signing the document.

Secondly, the agreement clearly spelled out that the entire Leased Land would be under the dominion and control of the Aristeus Palm Oil/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited. As such, at the company's discretion when necessary, our people may be asked to vacate the area of the Land they are occupying for the company's use. We strong object to that. The livelihood of our people touches and concerns their Land. They have lived, farmed and used their Land for other activities since then. As a result, we cannot sit by, for any one to just uproot them without any clear understanding.

Thirdly, the compensation offered by Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited per hectare of our Land, is an inadequate consideration. Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited knows or has every reason to know that in every nation, Land is a Legacy, Land is Money and Land is Power! We cannot therefore permit Aristeus Oil Palm Limited/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited to excessively entangle our Land for several years for such a minimal compensation.

Fourthly, Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/West Africa Agricultural#2 Limited developmental obligation for our area is not clearly in sync with expectation. We, along with our people, expect (a) building of schools (b) building of hospitals (c) construction of roads (d) drinkable water supply (e) electricity supply etc. These development discussions are what we in the Diaspora- USA/UK hope to partake. While we discuss, we are fully aware of the frantic effort made to tacitly grab lands in third world countries.

Finally, since the Land in those Chiefdoms is for the generation yet to come, by this, we put Aristeus Palm Oil Limited/West Africa Agricultural# Limited on notice that, anything less, will puzzle and urge us to take actions in support of our people and children's children.

And because of these and many others, we, the citizens of Sorogbeima and Makpele chiefdoms in both USA/UK, REJECT this agreement and let them be warned!!!!!!

**Cc/ Resident Minister, Southern Province, Republic of Sierra Leone
District Officer, Pujehun District
Honorable Member of Parliament, Pujehun East Constituency
Pujehun District Council Chairman
Reagent Chief, Zimmi Makpele Chiefdom
Paramount Chief, Sorogbeima Chiefdom**

Source | Global Times

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