600 Herdsmen Refuse to Vacate Kiryana Ranch

Over 600 herdsmen in Masindi have refused to vacate Kiryana Ranch that was recently acquired by Mukwano Group of Companies. The 64 square miles land is found in Kamengo Sub County, part of it along Masindi-Kafu road, stretching to the borders with Nakaseke and Nakasongola districts.

Mukwano got the land from Uganda Investment Authority, after Ziwa Ranchers, owned by aviation businessman commonly known as Captain Roy, allegedly failed to manage it in the last eight years since he took over from Uganda Livestock. In February 2010, following a court order Mukwano unsuccessfully attempted to evict the herdsmen. The company auctioned over 400 heads of cattle that were confiscated from the ranch.

The herdsmen ran to several government offices and successfully halted the eviction exercise. Last week, the herdsmen stopped Mukwano from opening up boundaries of the disputed land saying they are not informed of the new investor. The stampede has drawn in district political and security leaders.

Stephen Kabindi, one of the herdsmen affected says cultivators have lived on the land since 1954, while herdsmen came in about 20 years ago. He says in 1990's government promised to leave five square miles to the herdsmen, but in a breach of contract, only a square miles was given. Kabindi says they need at least 10 square miles onto which to graze their animals.

Samuel Rwabwogo, the Public Relation Manager of Mukwano Industries says, the company is not aware of the presence of any people in the ranch and as such, it comes as a surprise that some people want to sabotage an investor.

Byrauhanga John, the chairperson of the herdsmen says, over the years they have failed to develop the place because of such uncertainty. Today, they have set up a committee to, part of which it has been tasked to meet President Yoweri Museveni over the matter.

Media reports late last year indicated that the president blocked Captain Roy from selling the Ranch to a Libyan company. Allegations are rife that the ranch is more dilapidated that Ziwa Ranchers found it, yet intentions were to have it developed into a modern agricultural outfit.

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