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Hoima, Uganda

Communities in Uganda Protest Evictions and Rights Violations from EACOP and Related Projects

Hoima, Uganda—Communities in Uganda’s Albertine region held a public demonstration on Monday, 15th April 2024, to protest unjust evictions and the lack of a fair, transparent judicial process in the Tilenga oil project operated by French energy giant TotalEnergies.

The demonstration comes after 42 families were ordered out of their land to make way for the project despite inadequate compensation and unresolved land disputes, among other issues. They outlined these issues in a [statement](#) read out to the relevant authorities at the Hoima High Court during the protest.

This is the first time a protest of this magnitude, organised by the projected affected people and local leaders, has occurred with many project-affected persons from directly impacted communities in attendance.

Frustrations are mounting in response to the land acquisition process, which has been marred by numerous human rights violations, including denying women and girls a voice in the compensation process, as well as delayed and inadequate compensation. Those who have sought legal recourse have faced endless court delays which effectively equate to a denial of justice. The protestors also decried the harassment and intimidation of local women and human rights and environmental defenders who have been subjected to various forms of violence for voicing their concerns and opposition to the EACOP project.

Reading out the petition to authorities outside the Hoima High Court on Monday, communities emphasised that they are urging the court to uphold the principles of justice with fair, equitable proceedings and respect for the people of Uganda. They went on to state that failure to do so would perpetuate a grave injustice and erode public trust in government institutions and the rule of law.

In turn, communities are demanding that the ongoing evictions of the 42 families impacted by the Tilenga project, and others like them, be immediately halted, that the fundamental human rights of local communities be protected, and that further abuses by the government and corporate interests be prevented, among other things. The full statement can be read [here](#).

Quotes:

Zaki Mamdoo, StopEACOP Campaign Coordinator said, “We stand in full support of the many project affected persons who have come out to demand accountability and justice- asserting themselves as legitimate stakeholders in a project which is working to unravel their livelihoods and impact upon their wellbeing. Communities have correctly characterised EACOP as a project of exploitation and harm and will not sit idly by while TotalEnergies and others line their pockets at the expense of ordinary people and the environment. True development should be pursued in accordance with the aspirations of communities who are demanding decentralised and socially owned renewable energy systems.”

Samuel Okulong from Environmental Governance Institute said, “We have attempted to engage with the Ugandan government, the judiciary, and TotalEnergies diplomatically to address these issues, but our efforts have been met with high-handedness. The swift court ruling and issuance of eviction

orders coupled with the recent burning of boats on Lake Albert demonstrate a complete disregard for our rights.”

Balach Bakundane from the EACOP Host Communities organisation said, “We urge TotalEnergies to take responsibility for its actions. We also call on Lionel Zinsou, the former Prime Minister of Benin hired by Total to assess land purchases in Uganda and Tanzania, to speak out against this injustice. He must stop relying solely on Total’s reports and come to Uganda to meet with the suffering communities firsthand.”

Christopher Oppio from the Oil Refinery Residents Association said, “It’s unfortunate that our government is prioritising profit over people and the environment. We went to court in 2014 to seek redress for the violations of our rights and the case has never been decided, while the same court took only four days to hear and pass judgement against 42 Project Affected Persons of Total’s Tilenga oil project who lawfully rejected unfair compensation. We have come out to challenge this grave injustice and the use of the judiciary to repress the rights of communities in the interests of oil corporations.”

Advocate Tumusiime Kato said, “It is disturbing that the Government of Uganda is harassing its citizens to serve the interests of the investors without following all the due processes regarding land acquisition and compensation! The affected people in the Albertine region have been clear with their demands and have even put forward legal challenges to the unfair compensation and lower value rates, among other issues. These cases have been in Court for over 10 years! We know full well that justice delayed is justice denied and we support communities coming out in protest to raise their voices against the injustices in our Judiciary. We expect the relevant authorities to address their concerns and to engage affected communities meaningfully from this point forward.”

Editor Notes:

The High Court in Hoima [ruled](#) that compensation for 42 households, most of which are women and children, should be deposited with the court and the families evicted from their land. This ruling came after Uganda’s Ministry of Energy sued the 42 families on December 4, 2023, seeking to forcefully remove them from their land to make way for the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project.

These communities have been in a [long-standing battle](#) with TotalEnergies since 2012. That year, TotalEnergies commenced the process of compulsory land acquisition in Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts. This was done to pave the way for the construction of major oil projects, including export crude oil pipelines, central processing facilities, and oil roads, among others, under the Tilenga oil project.

The recent court ruling and the eviction order directly and indirectly affect over 500 people, including women, children, youth, men, and senior citizens. The villagers fear that if they do not resist these evictions, it will set a terrible precedent that encourages widespread land grabbing in the region.

Photos from the protest can be found [here](#)

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