

MERTI AND CHERAB DIVISION,

COUNCIL OF ELDERS,

BOX 5 MERTI

10th September 2010.

THE CHAIRMAN,

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR COHESION AND NATIONAL INTERGRATION,

NAIROBI.

Thro:

THE DISTRICT ^{PEACE}~~SECURITY~~ CHAIRMAN,

ISIOLO.

Dear Sir,

Ref: Complaint Letter

We wish to officially present to the Commission our grievances and complaint against the ^{provincial} ~~district~~ ^{commissioner} ~~administrator~~ (and his security counterparts) for their continued and biased involvement in matters that are prejudicial to the security of the local pastoralist communities living in this area. In fact, their recent activities have flared up tension and brought about disunity between the local people who have erstwhile been living peacefully. All this development is in relation to a new and upcoming Conservancy project in the area which is owned by a well connected and influential Kenyan private land developer of British descent Mr. Ian Craig of the famous Lewa downs Conservancy.

The new Biliqo/Bulesa Conservancy project which is at the heart of all this crisis was recently started in 'Chari' zone of Merti division without the full consent and participation of the local communities. In spite of the fact that the County Council of Isiolo is legally mandated to hold the land in trust for the people, due process were deliberately ignored and yet the project continues to operate in the area. The proprietor of the Conservancy project uses dubious means (financial favours, employment opportunities and far-fetched promises) in his protracted bid to lure the political leadership and a few members of the community into supporting the controversial conservancy project against the wish of the greater populace who entirely rely on this land for their lives and livelihood.

To this vulnerable pastoralists 'Chari' grazing land means their lifeline and minus it their livelihood which is basically their livestock stand to suffer immensely. This is a parcel of land that is traditionally set apart as their drought grazing reserve in case of severe drought disaster. So far the poor pastoralist communities' have counted huge livestock death as a result of failing to use this land. Over 18 households continue to wallow in abject poverty after their livestock were rustled in circumstances that point fingers to the activities of the conservancy group. Since their entry into the area there has been an upsurge in the nature and frequency of conflict with the neighbouring communities. Cases of human and wildlife conflict has recently gone on rise yet the communities have a good history of co-existing peacefully with these wildlife. In fact only within this short span of time a record of 7 elephants have been reported dead. Several human souls have succumbed to the killer bullets from this well orchestrated gangs of Samburu bandits who are known to be instigated by conservancy group. ~~Many~~ ^{About 7} innocent members of the community have been unlawfully tortured, maimed and even shot to death in a highly suspicious manner. There was a case of an innocent herder from Bulesa who was waylaid by the conservancy scouts on the pretext of poaching and shot dead only for them to apologize after the matter went public. The shocking part of it was when they asked the family of the deceased to submit one of their own to be employed as a scout. Such painful and inhuman treatment of the locals are uncountable as many go unreported.

Isulo District
The provincial administration led by the District Commissioner has been silent all through to the calls and cries of this poor pastoralists even when they are brutally attacked and livestock driven away in broad daylight. It is a known fact that they support the conservancy project at all cost. At one time when the locals protested against illegal erection of an air-strip on their grazing land the security details came in full force and went ahead to arm a few members of the community so as to protect the conservancy group. This has greatly divided the people and brought about intense bad-blood and disunity amongst the people.

The conservancy group has been using the provincial administration and relevant security organs to cancel several community elders meeting convened to discuss the matter. Owing to the growing demand from the local communities the conservancy group deliberately whisked the DC into the area to threaten the community into accepting the conservancy project or face the full force of law. The community members were denied the opportunity to say their side of the story. This was clearly designed to instil fear into the local communities and suppress them from demanding their God-given rights. Intense fear and uncertainty has largely remained in the area since then.

It's on these precarious grounds that we wish to request your kind commission to come in and save this poor and vulnerable communities from further tragedies especially in the hands of this provincial administrators who are really making life difficult for them at all cost.

Thanks

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Roba Halkano- Chairman - Merti and Cherab Division Council of Elders