



23<sup>rd</sup>/October/2021

## **STATEMENT ON ARREST OF AFIEGO STAFF**

Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) would like to inform our partners that six AFIEGO staff were arrested yesterday on October 22, 2021. The staff are currently detained at Kiira Police Station.

The arrested staff include:

- Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, CEO;
- Ms. Rachael Amongin, Assistant Communications Officer;
- Ms. Catherine Twongyeirwe, Finance and Administration Assistant;
- Ms. Mercy Nuwamanya, Front desk officer;
- Mr. Patrick Edema, Research Associate and;
- Mr. Paul Kato, Research Associate.

Of the arrested staff, one is a new breastfeeding mom while another is sick and was on treatment before she was re-arrested.

Police is yet to indicate the charges on which the staff were arrested or re-arrested.

### **PREVIOUS ARREST**

However, last week, on Wednesday October 13, 2021, police raided AFIEGO's Kampala office and arrested some staff, including two breastfeeding mothers.

The staff were released on police bond on Wednesday October 13 and Thursday October 14, 2021. A holding charge of operating without a permit was preferred against them. Police informed the staff that the National Bureau for Non-governmental organisations (NGO Bureau) had ordered for the arrest of AFIEGO staff.

AFIEGO staff do not constitute the non-profit company, a legal entity of its own that can sue and be sued. To be arrested for operating without a permit was therefore irregular.

Today, police is yet to arraign the AFIEGO staff who were arrested on October 13, 2021 before court. The charge against these staff cannot stand in court.

Instead of dropping the charges against the staff, they, alongside AFIEGO's CEO, were re-arrested yesterday.

## **HUNTED**

The arrests follow an August 20, 2021 directive in which the NGO Bureau ordered AFIEGO and 53 other NGOs or non-profit companies to halt their work. The order was not based on the law and AFIEGO, through its lawyers, wrote to the NGO Bureau stating thus. AFIEGO also complained about the October 13, 2021 illegal arrest of its staff, noting that working with a non-profit company is not an offence.

In the letter to the NGO Bureau, AFIEGO promised to take legal action against the bureau if the harassment of AFIEGO and its staff was not stopped.

It is notable that the arrests are part of the harassment and intimidation that AFIEGO staff and its partners have faced, more so this month. Below are some of the arrests that have taken place this month:

- On October 6, 2021, police raided AFIEGO's office in Hoima and arrested the Hoima Field Officer. She was not detained. She was released after spending several hours at Hoima Central Police Station.
- On October 7, 2021, police raided the AFIEGO office in Buliisa district and ordered it to close. They briefly detained AFIEGO's Buliisa Field Officer, Mr. Maxwell Atuhura. AFIEGO's signpost was vandalised shortly thereafter.
- On October 14, 2021, police in Buliisa arrested and detained Mr. Mugisa Kahero, the chairperson of ORGHA, a community-based organisation (CBO) some of whose members work with AFIEGO to defend the rights of the Tilenga oil project-affected people in Buliisa.
- Yesterday, on October 22, 2021, police in Kyotera district arrested and detained a community human rights activist, Mr. Robert Birimuye. He was released at about 5pm yesterday. Mr. Birimuye has consistently advocated for the protection of the land rights of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP)-affected people.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is a coordinated effort to silence critical voices that speak out against the destruction of the environment and the abuse of oil project-affected communities' rights. AFIEGO is the leader of the Save Bugoma Forest Campaign (SBFC) and alongside its partners, AFIEGO has been vocal in advocating for the protection of Bugoma forest from land grabbing, oil and sugarcane challenges.

AFIEGO has also been vocal in advocating for the rights of communities affected by the Tilenga, East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) and oil refinery projects.

The arrest of the AFIEGO staff and their partners is aimed at silencing the organisation and other critical voices.

AFIEGO informs all its stakeholders that everything is being done to ensure the release of our staff and partners. AFIEGO is unequivocally calling on police to release its six staff. The NGO Bureau should also desist from giving unlawful orders for the arrest of AFIEGO staff.

AFIEGO will continue processes to ensure that security and government officials who unlawfully arrest and detain AFIEGO staff are brought before courts of law for justice. AFIEGO also remains committed to defeding community rights and the environment.

**SIGNED**

AFIEGO's Board

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