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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kampala, Uganda

11-YEAR STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE: OIL REFINERY-AFFECTED PEOPLE HEAD TO COURT TOMORROW

Court will tomorrow, May 21, 2025, hear a court case that was filed by the oil refinery project-affected persons (PAPs) against the government of Uganda. The hearing will take place at Hoima High Court starting at 9.00am and will be led by Justice Vincent Opyene.

The case was filed by 11 PAPs on behalf of the over 7,000 people that were displaced for the oil refinery project by the Ugandan government. The case was filed with support from Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) in March 2014 and has spent over 11 years in the court system. The case challenges the Ugandan government's compulsory land acquisition and compensation processes for Kabaale Industrial Park, also known as the oil refinery project.

LAND ACQUISITION INJUSTICES

The government of Uganda commenced the process of acquiring the land for the project in 2012 and by 2014, many of the over 7,000 people who were displaced from Kabaale parish, Buseruka sub-county in Hoima district were yet to be compensated. Indeed, a Value for Money [audit](#) undertaken by the Auditor General in 2017 showed that only 4% of the PAPs were paid by February 13, 2014. The affected people argue that their right to receive prompt compensation as enshrined under Article 26 of Uganda's Constitution was violated.

More so, land use restrictions were placed on the PAPs in 2012 through institution of a cut-off date, but compensation, which was supposed to commence in June 2013, was still ongoing by 2018. Inflationary pressures eroded the value of compensation received by the PAPs as a result.

Worse still, the payment was based on outdated and unfair compensation rates of 2010 to 2011. Many people rejected the offers due to unfair assessments. Due to the above injustices, the people filed the court case to protect their rights.

DELAYED JUSTICE

Unfortunately, the case has experienced repeated delays characterised by numerous adjournments and transfers. For instance, the case was transferred from the High Court in Kampala to Masindi

and now to Hoima. The prolonged delay has inflicted deep socio-economic and psychological hardship on affected families, many of whom have been unable to rebuild their lives and regain their livelihoods.

It is worth noting that on April 15, 2024, frustrated by the long wait for justice, some affected people held a peaceful protest at the court in Hoima. They also wrote letters to the Chief Justice, Deputy Chief Justice, Principal Judge, and the Judicial Service Commission to demand for a fast hearing of the case.

Despite their concerns, the government has gone ahead with the oil refinery project and signed a deal with Alpha MBM Investments LLC on March 29, 2025 to pave way for construction of the oil refinery.

“This case shows how unfair the system can be. Cases filed by the government to take people’s land are decided quickly, sometimes in just days or weeks. But when ordinary citizens ask for justice, they are made to wait for more than 10 years. It’s time for the court to do the right thing and deliver justice to the oil refinery-affected people who lost their land without fair compensation,” Mr. Dickens Kamugisha, AFIEGO’s CEO, says.

Mr. Innocent Tumwebaze, the chairperson of the Oil Refinery Residents Association (ORRA), adds, “For over 10 years, we have waited for our voices to be heard. We lost our good land, our income, and our dignity. We urge the court to hear and conclude our case without fail.”

The affected persons in the case are seeking some of the following remedies from the court:

- A declaration that the compensation rates used by government to acquire the oil refinery land were outdated.
- A declaration that the use of cut-off dates through which land use restrictions were placed on the affected people’s property was unfair and unconstitutional.
- A declaration that the compensation process violated the PAPs’ rights under Uganda’s Constitution.
- A directive to government to put in place regulations for the assessment and payment of compensation.
- An order to the government to pay general damages to the affected people.

The people had also sought court’s intervention to stop government from paying them inadequate, delayed and unfair compensation, as well as stopping government from relocating them to a resettlement camp in contrary to commitments in the oil refinery Resettlement Action Plan (RAP). However, these prayers were overtaken by events, as conclusion of hearing of the case delayed.

Despite the delays, the people, remain committed to seeking justice.

ENDS

To read the profile of the oil refinery case, and how the project’s grave and sad impacts are still being felt by the people, click [here](#).

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