

Parliamentarians clash over Mubende gold mines eviction

By Nicholas Wassajja

A slurring row is brewing among MPs on the natural resources committee over the recent land evictions in the gold rich areas of Mubende district.

Last month, combined security forces stormed Mubende and evicted hundreds of what they called illegal gold miners in the sub-counties of Bukuya and Kitumbi in Mubende.

The disagreement pits the natural resources' committee chairperson Alex Byarugaba (Isingiro South) against a section of his members representing the areas of Mubende affected by the evictions.

Byarugaba says the committee is drafting a comprehensive report to draw conclusions on the evictions in the gold mines, but the MPs have overlooked the process and instead petitioned the House to intervene.

On Tuesday, the lawmakers; Patrick Nsamba (Kassanda North), Dr Michael Bukunya (Bukuya County), Simeo Nsubuga (Kassanda South) and Mbatekamwa Gaffa (Kasambya County) were scheduled to

present a petition on the floor of Parliament, highlighting challenges of the evictions, but plenary was suspended indefinitely.

Nsamba and clique have now been branded as reactionary, after it emerged that the contents of their petition strongly differ from the findings of the committee when it visited the area a fortnight ago.

"MP Nsamba is being reactionary in his way of approach. After the trip to Mubende, we agreed on rallying points, but he has run to plenary before we conclude with the report yet he was very

silent before the committee decided to tackle the matter," Byarugaba told a journalists yesterday.

When contacted, Nsamba said he will not budge because what he wants Parliament and the country to hear pertains to his people's survival and wellbeing.

"We shall present our issues on the floor when we get back to the order paper and MP Byarugaba will have a chance to explain to Parliament that what we are saying is not necessary. If the rest of the members agree with him they are at will to throw our motion out," Nsamba shot back.

According to Mbatekamwa, there is an urgent need to bring the evictions to light because the committee report is not select in nature to handle one issue and therefore, it can even come after two years.

He said: "The report is at liberty to disagree with us, but we want the public to know

the horrors that unfolded during the evictions."

On his part, Byarugaba told journalists that when they visited the area, they realised it was largely occupied by non-Ugandans

who were using dangerous substances for mining.

"The Government should organise these artisanal miners for licensing and resettle the tenants to fend for their families. But, we shall not tolerate those who degrade the environment by using mercury and cyanide," Byarugaba explained.

Mubende is now a hub of gold mining, attracting foreign investors from Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania, which saw earnings from gold exports rise to about sh1.2 trillion in 2016.



Alex Byarugaba

ght crime

ave been rolled out but and with no results.

They called for the review and streamlining of the refugee's status in relation to the current security threats and the struggle to earn a living.

At the same briefing, Osinde revealed that their party has kicked