Entebbe locals decry 'selective' evictions

Entebbe Deputy RDC urges residents to support the trade order for smooth business operations in the municipality.

BY PAUL ADUDE

As different municipalities, cities, and town councils across the country continue to enforce the Ministry of Local Government nationwide trade order, traders in Entebbe Municipality have expressed dismay over the alleged selective eviction by local officials.

The traders have decried a lack of warning notices, relocation plans by the municipal authorities and constrained spaces in the new market areas, while others allege that some kiosks were left operating in areas deemed illegal by authorities earlier on.

In Division B, Mr Geoffrey Kawuki, a saloon owner, said about 150 people were evicted without prior notice.

"They [municipal authorities] gave us six days to vacate our areas of operation, but we didn't hear any announcements. They say there was a man moving around announcing on a megaphone, but we mainly got to know when they began breaking our kiosks, that's when everybody began questioning what was happening, it was then that they told us of the trade order," he explained.

Mr Kawuki said some traders lost their properties during the eviction since people didn't have where to go while the enforcement officers destroyed stalls.

"Municipal officials declined to destroy the makeshift containers that were erected in the walkways and different parts around the new Kitooro Taxi Park for reasons we don't know. The containers are still operational yet some of us are no longer in business since our premises were destroyed," he said.

Mr Francis Kalyango, a metal fabricator who owned a workshop behind Central Market in Division A, alleged that the municipal authorities evicted him from an area were he was authorised to operate. "I pay taxes, and have all the required licenses to operate from here, but they came and destroyed everything I owned in just minutes. The government initiative would have been a good idea, but we are not in a road reserve," he said.

Mr Kalyango added: "We were in a wrangle over this land for four years after some businessman who reportedly bought land from division officials wanted to occupy it. Some of our colleagues left and they are now using this chance to steal this land and hand it over to the businessman."

However, *Daily Monitor* couldn't independently verify this allegation.

Mr Kalyango further accused political leaders of staying mute and yet several traders and residents have lost sources of livelihood.

"We no longer have leaders in Entebbe. What we have are dealers and land grabbers, who are seeking out every piece of government land to sell off," he said.

Ms Gladys Ayirota is a fish monger who was operating at Anderitah Beach Lane under the Manyago Fish Vendors Association that has since been evicted and ordered to get space in the Central Market. However, she complained that the market lacks space to accommodate new traders.

"Central Market has few stalls for traders, it's dirty, and doesn't have parking space," Ms Ayirota said.

Mr Karuli Rwatooro, who deals in motorcycle spare parts, said at least 20 youth apprentices have since been forced to return to their homes and abandoned the apprenticeship.

"We couldn't afford to feed them since the eviction crippled our business operations. Mechanics here got the Parish Development Model (PDM) and Emyooga funds but the youth have now gone back to their homes because work stations were destroyed," he said.

Mr Rwatooro further expressed dismay at the sanitation in the market where they were relocated.

He also warned that some people could resort to criminal acts to survive.

Ms Christine Kyokushaba, a pregnant fruit vendor, said she was injured during the eviction as she attempted to salvage her merchandise. "I had just arrived when the municipal council vehicle parked. Since the money I had invested was a bank loan, I tried to rescue some water melons and, in the process, fell down and sprained my leg, and I was taken to the hospital. But as they were still carrying out a scan to ensure that my baby is safe, I was informed that all my merchandise had been confiscated," she said.

Last year, while chairing a meeting between vendors and municipal council officials over the alleged misallocation of shops in the taxi park, Local Government minister Raphael Magyezi issued a one-week ultimatum to Entebbe Municipality local councillors who allegedly allocated themselves lock-up shops at the Kitooro Taxi Park to surrender them to the rightful vendors.

Efforts to get comment from the Entebbbe municipal Town Clerk, Mr Emmanuel Mugisha, were futile after our repeated calls to his known phone numbers went unanswered by press time.

However, Entebbe Deputy Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Frank Kyazze urged locals to support the trade order so that business operations run smoothly in the municipality.

"We want people to do business in an ordinary way. Those who say that they were not given alternative places or we were not prepared for this, should move on and start a new life," he said.

Mr Kyazze further warned against unscrupulous people using the enforcement of the trade order to grab land in the municipality.

"I talked to the town clerk, and we agreed that people should not use the exercise of the trade order to sort out their long-standing land ownership wrangles. We are going to carry out an audit over that, and anybody found doing that, we shall take him or her on," the Entebbe Deputy RDC said.



Mr Karuli Rwatooro stands on debris of his garage and motorspare shop that was destroyed by enforcers of the trade order in Entebbe Municipality, Wakiso District. PHOTO/PAUL ADUDE

TRADE ORDER DIRECTIVES

On March 10, the Ministry of Local Government issued a circular to chief administrative officers and town clerks directing them to restore trade order in line with established guidelines.

The directives include relocation of traders to formal markets, removal of campaign posters, enforcement of food handling standards, improved waste management and street lighting, regulation of public transport, and tighter enforcement of building and planning laws.

However, affected traders have decried the alleged high-handedness of enforcers who reportedly vandalise their kiosks and stole goods, causing them huge losses. They have also raised concerns over "low customer turnout in formal markets, poor working conditions, and reduced daily earnings".

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