

THE ARMY AUTHORITIES SAY COMMUNITIES NO LONGER STEAL ANIMALS FOR PRESTIGE BUT FOR SALE

New wave of cattle theft hits Karamoja

MOROTO

By Olandason Wanyama

The rampant cattle thefts among the Dodoth in Kaabong, Jie in Kotido and the Turkana from northwestern Kenya are threatening peace in Karamoja, according to security agencies.

After a recent siege of the Turkana kraals in Rupa sub-county, Moroto district by suspected Jie raiders from Kotido district, allegations were rife that cattle thefts are being fuelled by security forces.

Towards the end of December, elders from the Turkana and Jie communities agreed to end the cattle thefts during a cross-border meeting held at the Moroto district chamber hall.

Need for development

Decades of armed conflict and rustling had led to the stagnation of development in some parts of the region.

Now the Ugandan authorities claim livestock thefts could endanger the hard-earned peace in Karamoja.

According to the Uganda People's Defence Forces 3rd Division deputy commander, Col. Moses Kwikiriza, animals are no longer being stolen for purposes of prestige as the case had been long ago, but for sale.

"Let us walk the talk of peace instead of labelling our neighbours as enemies," he said. Kwikiriza told the



Karimojong attending a cross-border meeting in Moroto district recently. This was after cattle belonging to the Turkana were stolen. Photo by Olandason Wanyama

Turkana that while in Uganda they should follow the set rules and regulations.

"But if your animals are stolen in Uganda and then you go to report in Kenya, then there are high chances you will never recover them," he added.

Kwikiriza urged the Turkana to report thefts to nearest army establishments for easier

tracking of the animals.

The chairperson of the Uganda border peace committee, John Ekamaripus Longora who hails from Rupa sub-county, advised elders to ensure they curtail the new wave of animal thefts, which had become history.

"If we are to sustain peace in the region, we need to stop

these thefts," he noted.

Joseph Otita, a councillor for the worst-hit Rupa sub-county, called on the warring parties to consider making peace.

ON THE GROUND

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A Turkana elder, one Eporon, urged the leaders back home to consider securing funds to dig dams for the communities hit by drought.

"We would like the county's government to put in place some infrastructure for the people," he said.

Eporon said once the dams and other social services are in place, then "we shall realise fewer conflicts with our neighbours".

The Turkana county secretary, Peter Eripete, urged the pastoralists to find means of living in harmony.

He said he was grateful to the Uganda government for the hospitality extended to the Turkana pastoralists, saying "the Turkana would now be counting huge losses".

A member of the county assembly in Turkana, Patrick Imana, said in the near future his government would come up with information on the losses of the pastoralists.

"What we want is to see the herders mix freely while looking after their animals," he said.

Focus on the future

The Resident District Commissioner of Moroto, Richard Opio Osoto, asked the Karimojong and Turkana to focus on the future, not on cattle thefts.

"Ahead of us we might be hit by climate change, an issue that is likely to cost us our livelihoods," he said.

He said as administrator they would ensure the properties of the pastoralists are secure.

Osoto said the recent hiccup of insecurity cannot deter past efforts, "not even threaten prevailing peace".



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