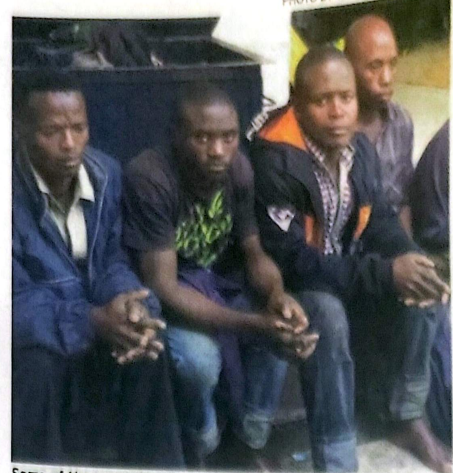


PHOTO BY WILSON MANISHIMWE



Some of the suspects arrested for illegal mining

25 RWANDANS, FOUR UGANDANS ARRESTED OVER MINING

BY WILSON MANISHIMWE

Twenty-five people have been arrested for illegal wolfram mining at Kirwa Mine in Nyarubuye sub-county, Kisoro district. This was during an operation conducted by the Police and army in Kisoro recently.

Of the group, 21 are Rwandans, while four are Ugandans.

According to Shafiq Ssekandi, the Kisoro resident district commissioner, there is no licensed person or company carrying out mining at Kirwa, but the intelligence obtained showed that people were carrying out mining.

"The Government has not licensed anyone. People have been mining illegally, so we conducted an operation that led to their arrest. They will be charged in courts of law," he said.

Meanwhile, the Rwandans will also be charged with illegal entry into Uganda.

Ssekandi explained that the suspects have deprived the Government of revenue through exporting minerals to the neighbouring countries.

"I wish to caution the other culprits because I have a list of other illegal miners in Kisoro. We are going to crack them down and ensure that we bring them to book," Ssekandi said.

"Whoever wants to carry out mining should apply for a mining lease and pay taxes to the Government," he added.

Ssekandi said nobody is allowed to employ foreigners in Uganda.

"Any foreigner you bring here to mine is supposed to obtain a work permit. The moment you engage such a person in your business and he is arrested, he will be charged for illegal entry," he explained.

The Kisoro LC5 chairperson, Abel Bizimana, noted that the district local government has not benefited from mining in the area.

He added that there has been laxity by security and local leaders, hence the increase in illegal mining.

"As we continue streamlining the mining sector, we as local government are going to employ more people to get royalties. I call upon the energy ministry to negotiate with us because there is a big gap between us and the ministry," Bizimana said.

Any foreigner you bring here to mine is supposed to obtain a work permit.

"The ministry has not made any effort to streamline the mining sector," he added.

Bizimana said the district council recently tasked the office of the resident district commissioner and chief administrative officer with profiling mineral areas.

Kisoro is well-endowed with minerals such as iron, gold and tin and most of the minerals are concentrated in areas of Busanza, Bukumbiri, Nyarubuye and Nyakabande.

Asked what he thinks of the large number of Rwandans carrying out illegal mining in the area, Bizimana said they are part of society.