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JINJA. Several traders in Jinja City have raised concerns following an enforcement operation by the Jinja City Council to remove illegal kiosks and structures erected along streets and road reserves.

Vendors said they have been remitting Shs10,000 monthly to the council to allow them to operate in the areas, adding that it was the very authorities that allocated them spaces.

Mr David Kayomba, a mechanic on Obote Road, said the demolition left him stranded after his workplace was destroyed and items were stolen.

He had secured a Shs2m loan from a money lender who kept his national ID card as collateral, making it hard for him to recover and or replace what he has lost.

Increased crime

Some traders fear the operation could push vulnerable people back into crim-

Jinja street traders fault city clean-up

inal activities.

Mr Kayomba said some of those affected were former street children and sex workers resettled through government programmes.

He questioned where the people who have started living on their own and fending for themselves would go after incurring losses following the eviction.

Ms Doreen Anitaku, a Walukuba resident who operated her salon at the site for 15 years, said traders were only verbally informed last Friday to remove their structures before the start of the demolition exercise.

She said the trade order operation in Masese, Downtown, Bugembe, Mafubira, and Mpumudde has mainly affected women and youths, which could increase insecurity in the city.

"It was shocking that council enforcement officers began demolishing kiosks on Sunday without giving people

enough time to remove their property," Ms Anitaku said, adding that they expected better treatment from leaders they voted for.

Ms Irene Kaka, a tailor from Walukuba-Masese in Jinja City, said she had operated in the area for 10 years, paying Shs10,000 monthly to the council, amounting to Shs12 million in revenue to Jinja City Council.

Ms Kaka said she received Parish Development Model (PDM) funds in January to boost her business, but now has no place to operate.

"We have not refused to leave but it was the council, which allowed us to work here, and we have been paying for the space. They should be considerate, especially to single mothers," she said.

Ms Kaka added that traders should have been given at least three months to prepare before conducting the demolition exercise.

Mr Sulaiman Obuuyo, 56, a butcher on Kyabazinga Lane, who had operated a butchery for about 20 years, said they understand that development has both positive and negative effects.

"But there should be a clear plan for relocating people instead of using force," Mr Obuuyo said.

However, Jinja City Council Spokesperson Rajab Kito defended the operation, saying traders had been notified through written notices for the past two and a half years.

He added that the traders were recently given two weeks to vacate, and the deadline expired on Sunday.

"We have been monitoring those attempting to rebuild illegal structures. The operation targets not only kiosks but also other illegal structures built without council approval," Mr Kito stated.

He also said the operation aims at or-

ganising the city and restoring trade order.

"We need revenue, but we cannot keep collecting money from a disorganised city. Organising the city will generate more revenue and prevent slum development," he said.

However, some vendors operating in Jinja Taxi Park took the council to court seeking to halt the eviction and removal of kiosks. Represented by lawyer Sharif Ssemaganda, the vendors sought legal redress against an eviction directive issued by Jinja City Council.

As a result, the Jinja High Court on Monday halted the eviction of more than 800 kiosk operators in Jinja Taxi Park and Bus Park until May 7. The decision was communicated by the court registrar after the vendors argued that they had previously reached an agreement with the former Jinja Municipal Council to redevelop the area without eviction.

However, Mr Kito said the court action will not stop the enforcement operation in other parts of the city.