

Gulu demolishes houses despite court injunction

GULU

By Arnest Tumwesige

Gulu municipal council has embarked on demolition of all condemned houses despite a court injunction issued by the assistant registrar of the High Court.

The injunction has now been issued thrice since May, when the affected people, who are being represented by five members, went to court.

The latest injunction barring the municipal council from demolishing structures was issued on June 19 and is supposed to end on August 18.

However, the municipal mayor, George Labeja, says some of the structures being demolished had put the lives of people at risk.

Labeja adds that as leaders, they cannot look on as buildings collapse and kill people, yet it is the municipal authority that will be dragged to court for being irresponsible.

"We are not taking anyone's plot. We just want people to put up new structures. We are ready to approve anybody's building plan so that people live in safe housing," Labeja added.

He asked the judicial officials issuing the injunctions to think about the lives of the people and consider having such structures demolished.

In January, the municipality marked over 1,100 structures as unfit for human habitation.

These include kiosks, papyrus



St Luke House that was demolished at the request of the owner.

Photo by Arnest Tumwesige

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ In August 2009, two siblings who were playing on the verandah of St Luke House were hit by falling debris, killing one instantly. The other died on the way to hospital.

and bamboo structures, huts and weak permanent buildings in the four divisions of Laroo, Pece, Bardege and Layibi.

The demolition exercise was launched on Wednesday in

Bardege division, with the razing of St Luke building and former Amigoz Club.

In August 2009, two siblings who were playing on the verandah of St. Luke House were hit by falling debris, killing one instantly. The other died on the way to hospital.

The deceased were Rebecca Akiteng, 10, and her brother Bruno Omait, 15, both pupils of Christ Church Primary School.

The exercise, which was jointly supervised by the four division chairpersons, is expected to be done in phases, beginning with the most dilapidated buildings.

Patrick Lumumba Oola, the Bardege division chairman, said the exercise is being done in good faith to prepare the town for city status.

However, Leonard Odoki, the chairperson of the affected people, asked the municipal authority to respect the court injunction and only demolish houses whose owners have consented.

"It is true that the owner of St Luke House gave the municipal council a go-ahead, but the rest have not. Any action on others will be defiance against the court order," Odoki added.