

Six people injured in Kyegegwa camp land clashes

BY HOPE MAFARANGA

Olivia Kitamba, Kasana Kula, Mugisha and three other unidentified people are nursing wounds at Bujuburi Health Centre II, following a fight with the management of Kyaka II refugee camp.

Sources said several people have been reportedly shot and injured by the Police in Kyaka II refugee camp located in Bukere village, Kyegegwa district. The clash was sparked off by a decision by the camp management to evict people accused of encroaching on their land.

A source said officials from the camp started demolishing houses of the residents without any notice, which sparked off the fight.

Residents armed with stones, pangas, axes and sticks took on the officials to defend their land. The officials, who had not informed the Police about their planned eviction, according to the Rwenzori West regional Police spokesperson, Lydia Tumushabe, had no option but to call the Police to rescue them from the mob.

Tumushabe said the Police fired bullets in the air and used teargas to disperse the residents.

She, however, refuted claims that people were injured by live bullets, saying the injuries were a result of residents hurling stones at the camp officials.

Tumushabe faulted the camp management for the chaos, saying they did not notify them about the eviction.

"We were not aware of their planned eviction. We were called at the last-minute after the situation got out of hand," she said.

A statement from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokesperson, Katherine Wainwright, said they were investigating the shooting claims.

When contacted, the Kyegegwa LC5 chairperson, John Byamukama Kisoke, said they were holding an emergency meeting with UNHCR representatives and other officials to find a lasting solution.

■ BACKGROUND

In 1964, the Government degazetted Kyaka I and II camps to accommodate refugees who fled the conflict in Rwanda.

When Rwanda stabilised, the refugees left the settlement. In 1994, Kabarole district, under Fagil Mandy, as the then district administrator, oversaw an exercise where the settlement was reduced and some land given to residents.

Kyenjojo district was later carved out of Kabarole and the land in question went to the new district.

Kyaka II refugee settlement is found Kyegegwa in western Uganda. It covers 81.5 square kilometres in the three sub-counties of Mpara, Kyegegwa and Kabweza. The settlement is divided into nine zones — Sweswe, Buliti, Bukere, Mukondo, Ntababiniga, Kakoni, Bwiriza, Byabakora and Kaborogota.

Kyaka II is managed by the UNHCR and the Office of the Prime Minister's department of refugees.