SSEMBABULE

Over 50 families flee to church after panga-wielding gang attacks

By Dismus Buregyeya

More than 50 families from Ntyazo and Kabagalama villages in Lwemiyaga county, Ssembabule district, have fled their homes and sought refuge at St Ann Church after a gang armed with pangas attacked the area, destroyed houses, damaged plantations and injured several residents.

The attack happened shortly after the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) First Division detachment withdrew from the troubled villages that have been affected by a long-standing land conflict.

The incident reportedly occurred from midday on Saturday up to the early hours of Sunday. According to local leaders, the attackers advanced towards the church where displaced residents had sought shelter. However, Field Force Unit police officers intervened and forced the gang to flee.

Area LC leaders said several residents were attacked while returning from a bar.

Among the injured were Moses Mushabe and Enock Assasirwe, who were reportedly speared during the violence. They are currently receiving treatment at Lwemiyaga Health Centre.

The area Member of Parliament, Emmanuel Rwashande, said he would present the matter before Parliament and had already informed President Yoweri Museveni about the worsening insecurity in the area.

Following the violence, intelligence personnel from the Masaka-based Armoured Division, led by Capt. Hudson Kamango, together with officers from the Internal Security Organisation and Police, rushed to the scene and launched investigations.

Museveni had earlier directed the State House Anti-Corruption Unit to investigate the 40-year land conflict at Ntyazo, where close to 100 families were displaced.

The latest violence comes after affected families forcefully returned to their homes, despite unresolved land disputes.

Earlier incidents reportedly involved gangs torching houses and injuring more than 20 cows after the affected residents attempted to reclaim the disputed land.

The Ssembabule resident district commissioner (RDC), Jane Frances Kagayi, criticised the move by residents to forcefully return to the land, warning that it could worsen insecurity in the area.

In February, several people were injured during clashes at Ntyazo after Lands State Minister Sam Mayanja cancelled a planned locus meeting in the area.

Displaced families had on February 7 and 8, 2026, forcefully returned to their respective *bibanja* from which they had been evicted between 2021 and 2022.

The clashes mainly occurred at the farm belonging to Vicencio Bagalukayo, who is accused of masterminding the eviction of over 100 families from Ntyazo village.

Bagalukayo's workers reportedly confronted the returning residents, sparking violent confrontations that prompted the deployment of anti-riot police and UPDF soldiers to prevent further bloodshed. The displaced residents later relocated to nearby St Ann Church, where they camped together with their families and livestock.

In a letter dated January 27, addressed to the Ssembabule RDC, Mayanja had scheduled a locus visit meeting for February 12 at Ntyazo Block 31 Plot 1 and Block 30 Plot 2

The meeting was intended to resolve the matter and he had also invited officials from the State House Anti-Corruption Unit, Police and other stakeholders.

However, residents told New Vision online that they forcefully returned to the land after learning that Mayanja had canceled his visit.

Kagayi noted that the affected residents had previously met the President, who listened to their grievances regarding the land dispute.

One of the affected residents, Umar Kalanzi, whose house was destroyed during the conflict, accused authorities of failing to protect evicted families.

Last year, lands minister Judith Nabakoba intervened in the escalating land wrangles in Ssembabule after violence broke out in Ntyazo village, forcing families to flee their homes.

New Vision has learnt that, despite a Supreme Court order staying the eviction, suspected criminal gangs have continued attacking affected families.

Former area Member of Parliament Theodore Ssekikubo, who initially spearheaded mediation efforts between landlords and residents, said the conflict had increasingly taken a political dimension.

"I bought land from Bagalukayo Mukasa after he defeated the affected people in court," Ssekikubo said, adding that he purchased about 180 acres.

Ssekikubo further revealed that he later negotiated with Bagalukayo to surrender at least 300 acres to the affected community members.

"To my surprise, some community members led by Robert Tayebwa rejected the offer," he said.

Tayebwa is among those currently in a legal battle with Bagalukayo before the Supreme Court.

PHOTO BY DISMUS BUREGYEYA



Enock Assasirwe, one of the victims who was injured following the attack by a panga-wielding gang shows his wounded leg to police officers in Ntyazo village, Lwemiyaga county, Ssembabule district

AREA LEADER REACTS

The Ssembabule district council chairperson, Patrick Nkalubo, said the conflict could eventually be resolved through a land fund initiative aimed at protecting vulnerable residents from eviction.

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