

URGENT ACTION

APAA COMMUNITIES ATTACKED, FORCIBLY EVICTED

Since 3 January, rangers from the Uganda Wildlife Authority have been carrying out forced evictions of communities in the Apaa area in northern Uganda. They have burnt homes, looted property and attacked community members. Hundreds of people have been rendered homeless, while several others remain at risk of forced evictions.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

*The President of Uganda
H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni
The State House of Uganda
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Kampala, Uganda
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to you on the case of communities living in Apaa, northern Uganda.

Between 3 January and 27 March, the communities living in the Juka, Acholi Ber, Oyobi, Oloyo Kampala villages in Apaa area were subjected to forced evictions by rangers from the Uganda Wildlife Authority. The rangers burnt homes, looted property and beat up villagers despite the presence of Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) soldiers who were deployed to the area on 2 February to protect the communities.

Hundreds of people have been rendered homeless and are exposed to a range of human rights violations. Villagers still living in the Apaa area risk being forcibly evicted.

Forced evictions are in violation of the Ugandan constitution and international human rights law.

Journalists trying to cover the ongoing evictions and violence in Apaa have been denied access to the area.

I call on you to:

- *Ensure that forced evictions in the Apaa area stop immediately;*
- *Ensure that the Apaa residents who have already been forcibly evicted are provided with access to effective remedies including adequate compensation and alternative housing;*
- *Ensure that impartial, thorough and transparent investigations are carried out into the actions of the Uganda Wildlife Authority against the communities in the Apaa area as well as the role of the UPDF soldiers deployed in the area for the protection of the villagers and hold those found responsible to account without recourse to the death penalty.*

Yours sincerely,

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Apaa area has been subject to territorial disputes for decades. Since 1987, the residents of Apaa have been forced to flee because of the Lord's Resistance Army war and settle in camps outside their villages. In 2002, while still in camps, the Ugandan government gazetted the area as a nature reserve to promote tourism in the north. Now Apaa is part of a boundary dispute between Adjumani District, which has designated the area a wildlife conservancy and forest reserve, and Amuru District, which claims it as community ancestral land.

Between March and May 2018, hundreds of people in Oyanga, Luru, Acholi Ber and Gaji villages in Apaa area, northern Uganda, were left homeless after forced evictions by members of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF). The soldiers burnt down more than 250 homes, destroyed property and beat up villagers. According to media reports, the forced evictions were carried out at the behest of the Uganda Wildlife Authority and the National Forestry Authority who allege that the villagers are occupying Zoka Forest reserve and East Madi Game Reserve.

In addition to being in violation of the Constitution of Uganda and international human rights law that Uganda is a state party to, the forced evictions were in contravention of an injunction issued by Gulu High Court in February 2012 instructing Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and its agents to stop "further eviction, destruction, confiscation or conversion and/or interfering with the land rights, occupation and uses of land belonging to the [local communities] in the areas of Pabbo and Apaa in Amuru district, pending the determination of the main suit" which was filed by the communities and the local MPs against the UWA and the Government of Uganda for violating their rights to ownership of land.. Despite this, UWA rangers have continued to attack and forcibly evict the communities. They also blocked the communities from rebuilding the destroyed homes following the violent forced evictions.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 11 June 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Communities facing forced eviction [They/their/them]

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/8409/2018/en/>