

STATEMENT BY MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS TO PARLIAMENT ON REPORTED LOSS OF LIVES AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY OF SOME COMMUNITIES IN AGAGO AND KOTIDO DISTRICT

Rt. Hon. Speaker, at the 29th Sitting of the 2nd Meeting of the 2nd Session of the 10th Parliament of Uganda, held on Tuesday 6th February, 2018 Hon. Judith Franca Akello Woman MP, Agago District raised concern over the loss of lives and destruction of property of some communities in Agago District by Karamojong Warriors. The Ministries for Karamoja Affairs and Internal Affairs undertook to provide a response to Parliament on the said matter, and this is the statement.

Rt. Hon. Speaker,

1. Loss of lives in Agago and Kotido Districts

On the 30th of January 2018, two young boys who were looking after animals were apprehended by three male hunters speaking Acholi Language and from the Agago side, near Longo Dam in Kotido District. The hunters also had hunting nets, three dogs, spears, and knives. This is an area used by communities from Kotido, Kaabong, Agago, and Kitgum Districts for fishing, grazing animals and hunting.

The people who apprehended the two boys (Apei 21 of Lopanga and 17 year old Irar son of Lokritak who was killed by the hunters) did not explain to them why they were being held. The hunters instead knifed IRAR next to his heart. The elder Apei managed to disentangle himself, but not before he was hit with a knife on his head, and another hit on his left side. He managed to run to his parents and narrated what had happened to them. He was hospitalized in a Health Centre in Kacheri Sub-County Kotido District, and eventually discharged.

It is stated that the hunters had laid a trap for an animal, and the trap had indeed caught an animal. But when they came to collect their prey, they found when some people had taken away both the trap, and the prey, and hence their anger.

This case was reported to RDC Kotido by the LC III Chairman Kacheri, but the RDC did not act on it. This incident created tension on the border between the two Sub Counties of Kacheri in Kotido, and Paimol

in Agago, but people went about their business normally between 31st January and 5th February 2018.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, on the 5th of February 2018 the relatives of the slain boy went to recover the remains of the boy. They found four(4) hunters, all Acholi from Agago whom they captured. They demanded to know from them who had killed the young man. These were Ochaya, Ochan Walter, Otto Bosco, and Oyo David. The captives explained that they did not know who had killed the boy and in the process one of the people from Kacheri tried to intervene on the behalf of the captives, but instead he was beaten.

The captors then tied up their captives and started beating them up. Two of the captives (Ochaya and OChan), were killed using pangas and axes, as they started to beat the third (Oyo David), the fourth (Otto Bosco) tried to escape. They chased him, threw spears at him and he was not caught. Oyo David on the other hand took advantage of the situation and escaped with serious injuries. He was able to hide from people who were tracking him, and managed to get home, where he narrated what had happened to his friends. He was then taken and admitted in Kalongo Hospital in Agago.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, it is further reported that on the 7th February, a group of people from Agago attacked six (6) hunters in Kacheri in retaliation, but five were able to escape, although the sixth was killed.

It is significant to know that all these activities and killings took place in Kotido District. They are not in any way connected to the regular movements of the Karamajong Herdsmen in search of water and pasture. They are acts of lawlessness and criminality which are being investigated by security agencies. The scene of crime is a very massive area, with hardly any roads, and this has made the investigation process take longer than it could have been done given the sensitivity of the matter. The clan leaders and kraal leaders from both sides have taken the lead, and are working with security agencies to identify the perpetrators of the crimes. The perpetrators are very well known because the two communities have been living together harmoniously,

and will be handed over to security agencies immediately after their arrest.

Separate meetings were held with the leaders of the two districts, and a joint meeting at Abim, which was attended by some Members of Parliament from both Districts, District Leaders, Elders, Kraal Leaders, LC III Chairpersons of border Sub-Counties, the UPDF Division Commanders, Uganda Police Force, and Internal Security Organisation and all these efforts are aimed at apprehending the perpetrators of the crime to be brought to book, and peace created between the two communities.

Rt. Hon. Speaker,

2) Destruction of Property by Karamajong Warriors

Like the practice has been, it is true that Karamajong Herdsmen **(AND NOT WARRIORS)** have moved to neighboring Districts of Agago, Pader, Kitgum, Otuoke, Alebtong, Amuria and Katakwi. They are not warriors anymore because Government has disarmed them, and their conduct has significantly changed.

The prolonged draught in Western Kenya, piled pressure on the resources available in Karamoja, forcing the herdsmen to move West. The movements are mainly by people from Kotido District, where government is yet to construct a big water reservoir, like it has done in the districts of Moroto, Napak and Kaabong.

Prior to these movements, government has we have always encouraged district leaders to engage the host districts and agree on some basic principles. Government has advised that the security agencies should be involved before movements such that a census is conducted before the movements, as well as at the time when they are returning to Karamoja when the rains commence. Government encouraged the veterinary departments in the moving and host districts to collaborate and ensure that there is control of diseases. Government demands that Kraal leaders should deal directly with Chairpersons LC III in the host Sub-Counties, to be able to sort out issues like food destruction and stealing, local fights and livestock thefts.

The reality on the ground is that often the herdsmen move even before their district leaders know. The new tendencies is also that Kraal leaders stay back home and only leave the Kraals to young men, aged between 12 and 16 to manage, and control the Kraals using mobile phones. These cannot restrain others from entering people's gardens and at times taking away some food. The herdsmen also move without any food stocks, and so depend on what they pick from other people's gardens.

Rt. Hon. Speaker, the people need intensive mobilizing by all categories of leaders in order for people to completely settle down.

The criminal acts are being investigated and prosecuted. Plans are underway to have massive mobilization and sensitization of the communities. We call upon all leaders to rise up this occasion for peace building and harmonious living in the area. Government cannot do it alone.

The current situation is calm and should be exploited by all to eliminate criminality and create friendship while efforts to improve government services are stepped up.

We thank you for listening.



Obiga Kania (MP)

MINISTER OF STATE FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS

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