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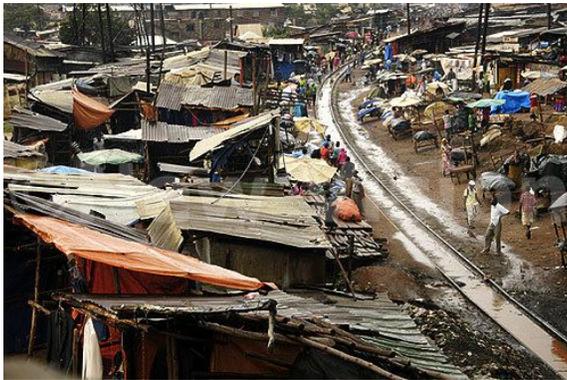
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## Railway encroachers petition over looming eviction Publish Date: Jul 22, 2014



KCCA gave the encroachers on the railway line reserve 28 days to vacate. Time is running out. PHOTO/Ronnie Kijambu newvision

By Umaru Kashaka

With only less than a week remaining for KCCA to evict over 80,000 encroachers on the railway line reserve from Namanve to Busega, local leaders have petitioned the minister in charge of the presidency and KCCA Frank Tumwebaze to put the move on hold.

Recently Kampala Capital City Authority announced that together with Rift Valley Railways Uganda Limited (RVR) and Uganda Railways Cooperation (URC), they would revamp railway transport in the city.

The Authority gave the residents of Busega, Nateete, Nalukolongo, Ndeeba, Kibuye, Katwe, Namuwongo, Kinawataka, Banda, Kireka, Bweyogerere and Namanve 28 days to vacate the reserve, saying they are residing and operating 30 metres away from the railway line.

Led by Makindye East MP John Ssimbwa, the Local Council (LC) leaders and councilors of parishes of Bukasa, Kisugu and Wabigalo in Makindye on Monday requested that their people be given six months during which to relocate and find alternative accommodation.

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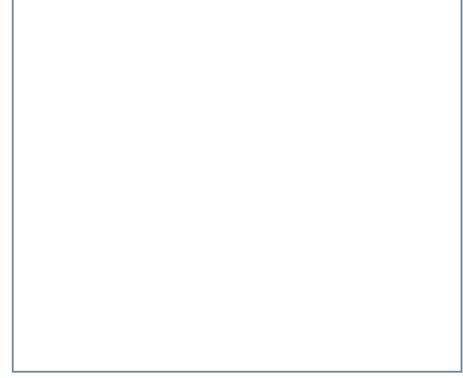
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Sections of the railway line route used to serve warehouses on Sixth Street Industrial Area Kampala are no more. PHOTO/Ronnie Kijambu

They claimed they have a number of structures along the railway line that include markets, churches, public offices, schools, recreational centres and washing bays.

"This abrupt and short notice is likely to affect the education of the children whose parents have houses within the reserve," said Asiimwe Naphiali, the vice chairperson of Kanyogoga zone at the President's office.

"I know that these people flouted the law but the order has been so immediate and it insinuates that these people have ever been given a warning and refused to abide by it."

The petitioners argue that while it is true that the railway line reserve is 30 metres on either side of the track, in some urban centres, the reserve is 15 metres.

"It would be prudent to establish whether it is 30 metres in these areas where houses are going to be demolished or not. If it is found to be 15 metres then we follow that because it seems not to be clear whether it is 30 metres or 15 metres," said Bukasa Parish Woman Councilor, Beatrice Mbabazi.



Petitioners say they have businesses along the railway and will need more time to relocate. PHOTO/Ronnie Kijambu

The petitioners also claimed that through the concession agreements, the government conceded to RVR an operational corridor of 10.4metres from the total railway reserve for which to operate the



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trains.

"The 10.4 metres is specifically defined as 5.2 metres from either side. Can't we now extend this to 15 metres on either side of the track so that we don't affect many people?" asked Emmanuel Masengere, the Kanyogoga LC1 chairman.

MP Ssimbwa said that as representatives of the affected people, they had initiated discussions with the management of both URC and RVR to see whether the residents could benefit from the Resettlement Action Plan under these establishments.

He said: "We are aware that these institutions put in place a resettlement plan that can cater for displaced people with no recognizable legal rights or claim to the railway reserve land that they are occupying. These people are entitled to compensation for the land on which their assets are eligible to compensation for their assets and resettlement assistance.



In response, minister Tumwebaze promised to organise a meeting involving KCCA engineering team, URC, RVR and Ssimbwa at City Hall on Tuesday to see how to handle the situation.

"There is a reason why KCCA is chasing you. Pioneer Buses that had brought relief to the people stopped operating and now we are badly in need of the railway to improve transport system in the city," he told the petitioners.

He said the planned meeting would also enable them find out whether there is a provision for resettlement or compensation in the Railway Act or not.

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