



**SENGWER COUNCIL of ELDERS**



13 July 2020

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **BURNING OF 28 SENGWER HOMES IN EMBOBUT FOREST, ELGEYO MARAKWET, 10 JULY 2020**

The following eight human rights and conservation organizations express grave concern over reports of ongoing forced evictions in Embobut Forest by the Kenya Forest Service (KFS). We are reliably informed that 28 homes with beddings and possessions were burnt in Kapkok glade on 10 July 2020 leaving families in the cold with no shelter. We once again call on the Kenyan government to end forced evictions in Embobut Forest and ensure that human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

The Constitution of Kenya and the Land Act 2012 (as amended in 2016) prohibit forced evictions carried out contrary to the law. On May 11, 2020, the President through the Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Co-ordination of National Government declared a moratorium on evictions for the period of COVID-19 pandemic. Protecting the right to adequate housing is critical to protecting Kenyans from the spread of the Corona virus and ensuring their recovery. The forced evictions and homelessness have increased the vulnerability of those affected to COVID-19 and its negative socio-economic impacts.

The forced evictions come at a time when the European Union (EU) and the Government of Kenya are considering the resumption of Kes 3.6 billion funding to the Water Towers Protection and Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Programme. The program was stopped after numerous human rights violations including forced evictions of Sengwer Indigenous people, the killing of Robert Kiroich and the serious injury of David Kipkosgei Kiptilkesi in 2018.

The Kenyan government must use this time to dialogue on its approach to conservation and how to consistently ensure the community land rights of the Sengwer indigenous people and other traditional forest peoples can also be recognized as community owner-conservators.

Consequently, we call on the Government of Kenya to immediately;

- Make a Ministerial Statement to halt the KFS operation and forced evictions in Embobut Forest;
- Adhere to the Constitution, the Land Act and the Presidential declaration of a moratorium on evictions for the period of COVID-19 pandemic;
- Ensure that all those affected can live peacefully in the forest glades, no further retaliation happens to Sengwer community members and that those responsible are brought to justice;
- Provide shelter and basic needs for the affected families.

Signed

Sengwer Council of Elders  
Amnesty International Kenya  
Defenders Coalition  
Katiba Institute  
Kenya Human Rights Commission  
American Jewish World Service  
Forest Peoples Programme  
Natural Justice