

His Excellency the Governor
North West Region
Republic of Cameroon

20 July 2015

Urgent investigation into the professional activities of Divisional Officer (D.O) Aminkeng Charles Formin of Mbengwi, Sub Division, Momo Division

We, the traditional Fons (chiefs) and elites, request for an immediate investigation into the professional activities of Divisional Officer (D.O) Aminkeng Charles Formin of Mbengwi. We represent more than 2000 villagers who are nowadays confronted with heavily deforested and degraded farmlands. The original mosaic of forest and savannah land has been changed into almost monotone grassland. This has much to do with the Mbororo grazers who entered the 80,000ha of land, and who gradually took over the hill area for its activities, and the unprofessional approach of the Divisional Officer (D.O) in relation to these activities. This results in destruction of natural habitats and in social conflicts with the local villagers. Farmers file petitions on a daily basis, of new destructions to farmland and crops. The loss of family net revenue is enormous, and it pushes households into deep poverty.

The Mbororo grazers use a more intensive approach than the smallholder farmers. They allow large groups of cows, horses and sheep on the hills, and use intentionally created bushfires in order to allow the quick regeneration of green herb for pasture especially in the dry season. Intensive grazing activities start to take place in areas that were historically protected by farmers and hunters for biodiversity reasons, for example in the habitat of the critically endangered Cross river gorilla. The remaining population of this species is estimated at 150 individuals in Cameroon, and makes the species the world's most endangered large primate. The destructions in Meta push this species further into extinction.

We, the traditional Fons and elites, strongly disagree with the professional approach of Divisional Officer (D.O) Aminkeng Charles Formin on the matter. His activities intensify land use conflicts, with more poverty as a direct result. He shows no respect for the Fondoms, and he applies intimidation and corruption in order to rule over the land. His approach does not allow anymore for rehabilitation of this land, and to bring peace and development on individual and community level.

We want to remind you about the following problems on our land, which have been directly provoked by the Divisional Officer Aminkeng Charles Formin:

- We have been confronted with refusals from the D.O. to set up the statutory Lands Consultative Board in order to determine ownership of land, before demarcating lands for applicants. His activities are in violation of the Land Tenure Law, and create disorder at private, family and community levels. We have witnessed that he openly competes for land, instead of being an impartial referee for applicants to land titles. We have been direct victims of his demands for cash money, under the form of corruption, whereas he is a civil servant who should act on behalf of the State.
- We request for an investigation of the role of the Divisional Officer in the Agro pastoral commission in Mbengwi. We are surprised that this commission only has the following members: the Divisional Officer himself, the Ardo (Mbororo chief) and the sub delegate of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (MINEPIA).

- Destruction of farmland and farm crops by Mbororo cattle in Mbengwi take place on a daily basis. Families are confronted with enormous losses of net revenue, as a direct consequence of the destructions. We still wait for the direct, professional actions by the D.O. on the matter. He has been regularly informed of the problems, through farmers' petitions, requests from Fons, campaign reports, and articles in the media. Independent data is lacking, but based on our communications with villagers, we calculate that Mbengwi Sub Division loses 80 percent of its crops, due to destructions by the cows and grazers.
- The Mbororo grazers have been using very intimidating tactics, which are in clear violation of the law. We have reported 4 deaths, beatings and rape of women, and destructions of houses to the Divisional Officer. But our requests to the D.O. for direct actions remain unheard. This intensifies the impression that the D.O. supports the illegalities, and intimidating approaches. We have been informed by some Mbororo grazers that the D.O. accepts bribery in order to avoid direct action against them.
- We have been informed that a Mbororo grazer on our land is heavily armed, and might constitute a direct danger to the lives of our villagers, and to peace. He has been threatening several of our villagers, and he refuses to respect law and order in this country. We ask for a direct intervention by the Rapid Intervention Battalion, and ask for an investigation in to the alleged support of the D.O. to this person.
- We are worried about the direct involvement of the D.O. in the recent (April-May 2015) arrest and detention of a Cameroonian human rights activist that has been working hard for respect of the rights of farmers in Mbengwi. We hear from trustworthy sources that he asked for the arrest and detention, instead of listening to the people in order to resolve the problems.
- D.O Aminkeng Charles Formin has been creating new villages in the quarters SANG and MUNAM. These quarters are located on the farmlands of more than three (3) Fons, without any prior consultation and dialogue on the matter.
- He even continues with his battle, with the repositioning of Frigyeng as an independent village, instead of a quarter.
- He has created Fondoms in Sang and Munam in 2013, of which Mr Mukiawa was presented as crowned Fon of Sang, and Mr Henry Mukam Ndegum in Munam. The original Fon of Munam is Fon Fominyen of Nyen, who has ruled over the land for hundreds of years. The D.O. did not organise dialogue with Fon Fominyen, but instead, decided to take these administrative, destructive decisions on his own. Frigyeng is a farmland on which Guneku people (descended from Nyen) are settled. D.O. Aminkeng Charles Formin is trying to elevate a quarter head from Oshie to Fon, who was allowed there to farm alongside the Guneku people.
- His attempts to divide the Fondoms further complicate the situation as there are already 31 Fons for 29 villages. We strongly disagree with his approach on the matter, which are an attempt to divide the land and Fondoms. This might provoke civil conflicts. This clearly demonstrates unprofessional behaviour.

We have all documents available that can prove the various allegations that were made in this petition.

Sir, we underwrite the approach of his Excellency President on good governance, law and order and peace, and therefore we invite you to investigate these matters without further delay, as Mbengwi Sub Division is on the brink of social and civil unrest and conflicts.

Your Excellency, accept our pledge and commitment to the institutions of the land,

Copied:

Regional Delegate of National Security North West
S.D.O. Momo division
Commissioner Special Branch Mbengwi
Commissioner Territorial Surveillance
Company Commander Momo Division