

Gov't Indicted For Forceful Repatriation Of Belgian National

By CHRIS MBUNWE

The Government of Cameroon has been subjected to international indictment over what many have termed as the forceful and illegal repatriation of a Belgian human rights defender, Jan Joris Cappelle.

According to a report published by the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, NCHRF, the Belgian was not only illegally expelled from Cameroon, but he was also arbitrarily arrested, detained and was levelled with numerous trumped up charges, criminalising his work as human rights defender.

The rights activist was subjected to an illegal arrest, torture and detention at the 10 District Police Station in Yaounde.

The Divisional Officer of Mbengwi, Charles Aminkeng at the time is reported to have ordered the destruction of Tudig Community Organic Farm and a pilot demonstration farm owned by Jan Joris Cappelle. The crops were declared as paddock for cattle.

This condemnation on the abuses of the rights of the Belgian citizen, who was still enjoying his legal residence permit, has drawn the attention of several international and national rights groups among which are Amnesty International, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and the Yaounde based Centre for Environment and Development. A January 18 publication from these human rights groups held that the Regent Fon of Tudig and two of his subjects were also arrested and the case is pending in

Court.

These Rights Groups had filed a complaint at NCHRF, denouncing acts of intimidation against members of a defence group on environmental rights in the Northwest of Cameroon.

The NCHRF report from enquiries carried out by the Working Group on Civil and Political Rights, reveals gross violation of the rights of the Belgian human rights defender and those of the Regent Fon of Tudig, Vincent Awazi, Mathias Awazi and Humfred Manjo in violation of both national and international legal instruments on the protection of human rights.

Jan Joris Capelle, a Belgian Consultant on agriculture and best practice on how to develop Community organic farm, was invited to Cameroon by the Fon of Tudig, who is based in the USA, on behalf of his Community to help develop that community and drag them out of poverty.

The NCHRF report states that the Belgian was issued a one year residence permit number 1181683605 on July 21, 2015. With the collaboration of the entire community, an organic farm was set up for the community and another pilot experimental farm was setup on a purchased piece of land of four hectares and owned by the Belgian.

He was President of the Organic Farming for Gorillas Cameroon (OFFGO) Association and Human Rights Defender.

This Association's formalisation process is said to have suffered several delays at the office of the DO of Mbengwi for reasons which were later discovered as protecting some hidden interest groups against the Tudig community project.

According to the findings of the NCHRF, the local administrative and judicial authorities produced multiple trumped up charges against the human rights defender.

The NCHRF defines the motive of the expulsion "control over land". The charges against Jan Cappelle followed closely in reaction to a September 2015 report from traditional communities to the Governor of the Northwest Region about land grabbing.

The NCHRF calls for the authorities involved in the human rights violations to be brought to justice. The NCHRF further emphasised that those hidden interest groups made of some very wealthy business tycoons be fished out because they are accomplice in the gross human rights violations.

The NCHRF adds that it has received numerous complaints against many of these interest groups, who are architects of land grabbing which often lead to land disputes in the Northwest Region.

The report from the Human Rights Commission which was dispatch to the Presidency of the Republic 2018 signed by Laurette Kanga and Christopher Bobiokono is to enable the return of "Jan Joris Cappelle, and thus enable him pursue a proper legal proceeding with a view to resolving the misunderstanding surrounding his forced expulsion.

Meanwhile, the National Human Rights Commission held that Jan was expelled from Cameroon without the diplomatic consent of his country and accused the DO of Mbengwi Central, Charles Aminkeng for "being responsible for the destruction of the experimental and organic farm opened by Jan Joris in Tudig."