

RWENZURURU QUEEN VISITS KRC, VOWS TO PUSH FOR PEACE IN THE RWENZORI REGION

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Fort Portal

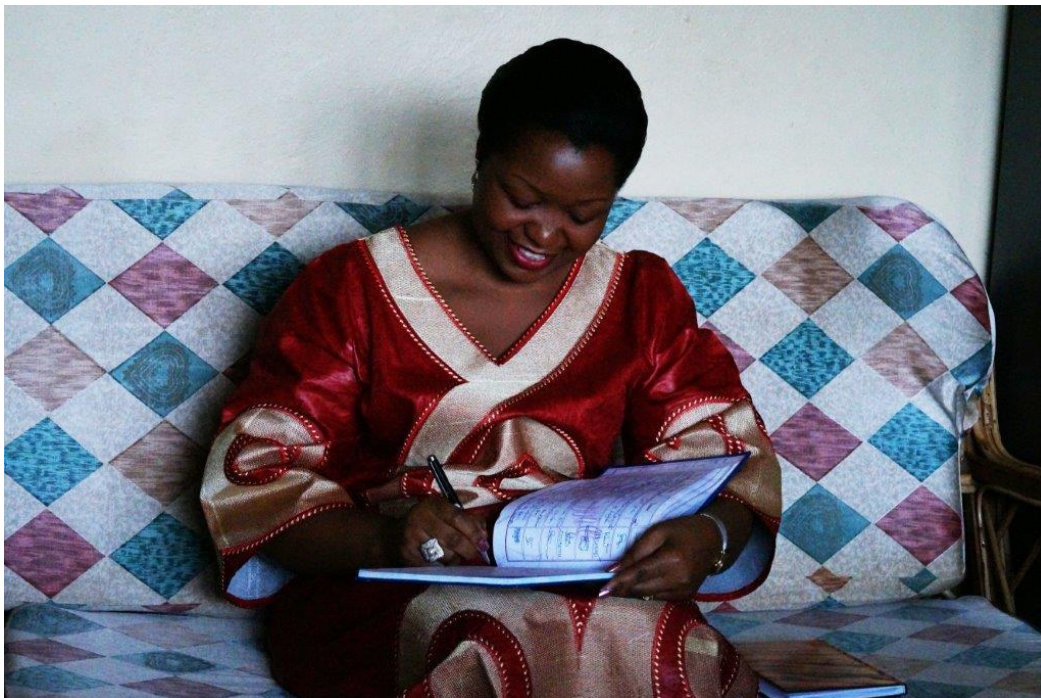
The tough looking royal guards, smartly dressed in their Rwenzururu attire, took vintage positions-as the motorcade carrying the amiable and benign queen of the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu Kingdom pulled into the drive-way at KRC Offices, Fort portal. This was not just an ordinary visit the queen was making. Not at all-as the soft spoken light-skinned queen made it clear to all, that enough blood had been shed -and it was time to heal the wounds among the various ethnicities in the Rwenzori Region, and work together to bring lasting peace.



Queen Agnes Ithungu(In red dress) in a group photo with KRC staff during her visit



Queen Ithungu addressing the KRC staff (not in camera), during her visit to the KRC offices.



The Queen signing the visitors Book, in the Director's Office

Though Queen Agnes Ithungu visit on the morning of 16th November 2016 was meant to be a courtesy call on KRC, it ended up being a serious interaction on matters of Regional Peace and Development

The Queen was received by over 30 members of the Board and Staff, led by the Executive Director, Mr. Julius Mwanga who could not hide his delight as he hailed the Queen and applauded the Rwenzururu Kingdom for the initiatives they have taken to improve the livelihoods of the people and the recently launched Peace initiative under the Rwenzururu Nyabaghole Foundation (RWENFOD), to foster peaceful co-existence in the Rwenzori region.

The initiative was started by the Rwenzururu King, Charles Wesley Mumbere Irema Ngoma and the queen with an aim of fostering peace and development in the Region.

In his message the KRC director observed the need for every stakeholder to take the mantle and promote peace for sustainable development amidst the national developmental agenda. He said KRC was committed to fostering peace and unity –as exuded through its many years of mobilizing various stakeholders to solve the various conflicts in the Region in the last 2 decades

Mr. Mwanga decried the rampant conflicts in the region and was bitter with those who propagate them along tribal lines. He said those were negative forces against development

‘if you want to know that our region is well endowed with enormous resources, then visit Karamoja. That’s when you will know our land is so blessed with fertile soils. Its all green while other regions are dry’. So lets harness the opportunities we have to bring peace and harmony in our region. Said Mr. Mwanga in reference to the great potential the region has to become the food basket of the country

Maurice Barnes, who sits on KRC board, applauded the queen for her efforts in promoting peaceful co-existence among the kingdom subjects and the region at large.



The queen having breakfast at Mountains of the Moon Hotel, with the KRC Team

She stressed that Rwenzururu Royal Guards are not warriors but guards of the royal family of OBR.

The queen also said that without peace the beautiful and rich resources of the region would not be beneficial to the locals in the region.

The Queen revealed that the Kingdom was undertaking various developmental projects which included: poverty alleviation initiatives, youth development programs, health and economic improvement.

The Queen also told her attentive audience that she, on an annual basis holds a campfire for the youth, meant to mentor them culturally and give them life skills,-the equivalent of the famed Ekisakate in Buganda

She pledged to participate in the youth campfire and provide career guidance to the participants.



The Queen sharing a light moment with the KRC ED, Mr. Julius Mwanga

KRC had earlier during a fundraising dinner hosted by the queen in Kasese pledged One Million shillings towards the work of the foundation. The cheque was officially handed to the queen during her visit . The 20 year KRC has been working with various development partners like DGF and USAID-SAFE to bring together various stakeholders in the quest for lasting peace in the Rwenzori Region

The Queen was later hosted to a sumptuous breakfast by the KRC Team, at Mountains of the Moon Hotel where a number of resolutions and action points were agreed upon. These included inter alia;

1. Joint fundraising for peace and other community development programmes, Training of the royal guards in conflict sensitivity and saving and credit
2. Organizing and facilitating a meeting between the Queen of Toro and the Queen of OBR and later the two will meet the princess of OBB
3. Support Rwenzururu Nyabaghole Foundation (RWENFOD) to develop a strategic plan
- 4 Support the queen effectively integrate gender in her development programmes

The current conflicts in the Rwenzori Region took a nose-dive and degenerated into a tribal crescendo after the February elections, mainly in Kasese and Bundibugyo Districts. This was exacerbated by lack of a coherent approach towards addressing the issues-as various ethnicities begun making counter accusations.

It's now hoped that with Rwenzururu Kingdom coming in to take lead in resolving the conflicts, then there is a ray of hope.



A front page headline that appeared in Daliy Monitor(Left) during the peak of the conflict. While Right some of the supects during a court marshal seating.The conflict claimed hundreds of lives and displaced thousands from their homes

It must be recalled that the skirmishes which begun in July 2014, when spontaneous attacks were recorded in Kasese, Bundibugyo and Ntoroko district where hitherto friendly neighbors turned swords against one another over tribal and political differences

These clashes mainly pitted the Bakonzo against erstwhile friends the Bamba/Babwisi as they clashed and maimed each other. Most sources claimed the clashes were exacerbated by the establishment of a rival cultural institution in Bundibugyo and yet Mumbere was the defacto leader of both tribes, having inherited the then Rwenzuru Movement-which had broken from Tooro, from his father Isaya Mukirane, in the 60s. The two tribes of Bamba and Bakonzo fought Tooro jointly and broke away to form their own kingdom . Even when government was recognizing the Obusinga bwa Rwenzuru later in the 2000s, he was called the King of Bakonjo and Bamba.

However the relationship got estranged as the Bamba demanded their own separate kingdom –which they were granted around early 2014 and installed their own king Lt Colonel Kanya. This is said to have not gone well the Rwenzururu leadership and supporters, thus the clashes. Various efforts by the government team led by Capt Mike Mukula later yielded results when the two kings met and signed a memorandum to work together for peace.

KRC has since the clashes unfolded worked with various stakeholders to find lasting peace in the Region. The visit by the queen and the subsequent resolutions to work with KRC are part of these efforts