

KAYANZI- THE FORGOTEN VILLAGE IN KASESE DISTRICT

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Kayanzi village is located in Kicwamba sub county Kasese district. It is only 10km off Hima trading Centre on Hima-Kasese highway. In July 2014, Kayanzi was one of the villages that suffered violent attacks that simultaneously rocked the region. The attacks in the area left about 15 people and houses burnt, and the memories of the dead are still fresh among the residents of Kayanzi. The other villages that were affected by the attacks included Bigando and Nkoko all from Kicwamba sub county. The villages are predominantly occupied by the Basongora ethnic group who traditionally are cattle keepers.

On Friday 5, February 2016, we set out to visit this village. We were a team of researchers from Kabarole Research and Resource Centre and the Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice, myself, Muhindo Happy Francis (KRC) and Mr. Bwambale Wilson (RFPJ). Our mission was to assess reports from peace actors in the area, claiming potential attacks on the village. According to the residents in Kayanja, the reports of a potential attack were expected since 23/12/2015 and they believe this information was available with the security agencies. However, no action was taken.

Branching off the Hima – Kasse road, we embarked on a daunting journey. There was no sign of a road leading to Kayanja in sight. A journey expected to last about 20minutes, took us an hour . Along the journey we kept meandering and dodging tree stumps and gullies left behind by the previous rainy season. On a rainy day, it would not have been possible to make it to Kayanja village.

There is no direct access road to Kayanja and therefore not possible for any new person visiting the area to travel there without services of a guide to show you the small paths and farms to find the village. To our surprise, even the locals will need the help of fellow locals to find the right way to the village!

Through the bushes, gullies and trees on the way, our eyes kept wondering around and all we could see were herdsmen and their cows and some people walking towards town or returning from Hima trading centre. Unlike in other places, there were not so many Boda-Bodas in the area. I guess, very few want to risk their bikes through tree stumps and gullies. For the entire distance of 10kms, there was no sign of a health Centre or a school in sight.

“That girl looks ripe for marriage” said one of the guides pointing to a young girl walking in the opposite direction as we headed to Kayanja. A debate ensued about the comment and attracted some disgust from some of the occupants in the car. I personally took the comment more seriously and changed the subject of debate. Our sympathy then went to the many girls who have to walk 20km (to and fro) to attend school and the risks they have to go through to finish school. We concluded that it will be unlikely for many girls to finish school if they have to walk a long journey to school. There will be many men wanting to marry the girls thinking they are

ripe for marriage. Besides, the men wanting to marry the girls, girls were likely to tire from walking the long journey school.

History of marginalization

According to the chairperson LC I, Mr.KaziniKadungu, the area has been marginalized for a long time. He argues that the marginalization is based on tribe. **“This district leadership is interested in impoverishing us and that is the reason there are no services like roads, schools and health facilities. I think they would like to see us extinct from this land. For me I don’t care whether you call me a musongora, for as long as you give me services”**. The elders in the area say, the plan for marginalization dates way back in 1986/87 and until now the area continues to suffer from poverty.



Group photo: KRC and RFPJ at meeting Kayanja residents

New threats for attacks

Prior to our visit to Kayanja, we had received reports from Peace actors in the area, that, there were threats for possible attacks. These threats were first received on 23/12/2015. We were told that the December attack was intended to rustle away Basongora cows. Another threat was

given for January 05, 2016. Residents of Kayanja village refer to a letter that they claim was circulated by the said attackers. A copy of the letter is said to have been given to local authorities. Unfortunately, the residents could not avail the team with the copy of the letter. In the meantime, the residents of Kayanja told us that, they were living in the bushes and on their tenterhooks because of the likely attack.

By this article, KRC and the Rwenzori Forum and Justice would like to call upon local authorities to respond to claims of a possible attack in Kayanja and neighboring villages in Kicwamba sub county-Kasese district. Secondly, for the Kasese district local government to respond to poor service delivery claims in Kayanja and other neighboring villages.

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