



EU, World Bank Brutalize Africans for “Carbon Credits”

The government of Uganda and the “carbon credits” firm New Forests Company — accredited by the United Nations and largely financed by the World Bank and the European Union — are under intense public pressure after evidence emerged that over 20,000 poor Ugandan farmers were brutally evicted from their lands in order for the U.K.-based company to plant trees. The atrocities, publicized in a September 22 report by the non-profit aid group Oxfam, have made headlines around the world.



Under the guise of saving the environment from global warming and climate change, armed enforcers reportedly burned locals’ houses to the ground — along with at least one child who was inside his home when it was set ablaze. The goon squads also reportedly terrorized and beat the residents, threatening to murder anyone who resisted.

“We were beaten by soldiers. They beat my husband and put him in jail,” Naiki Apanabang, who obtained her family’s land in recognition of her grandfather’s military service, told Oxfam investigators. “The eviction was very violent.” Apanabang and her eight children no longer have enough food to eat — let alone money for schooling.

Ugandan authorities granted the UN-accredited carbon-trading firm a license to plant trees on the land in 2005. So-called “carbon credits” earned from the plantation would then be sold to companies to offset their emissions of CO₂. The problem was that tens of thousands of people had been living off of the land for decades.

According to officials and New Forests Company, the residents were “illegal encroachers.” The locals, however, provided a very different account. Some of them had been given the land after fighting for the British Army during World War II. Others were invited to settle there by then-dictator Idi Amin some 40 years ago.

Legal cases to resolve the issues are still ongoing. And the High Court had even granted restraining orders against the evictions before many of them happened. But now, it might be a moot point: Residents’ homes, farms, livestock, schools, hospitals, and churches have already been demolished. Apparently no compensation has been provided, either.

“People from New Forests came with other security forces and started destroying crops and demolishing houses and they ordered us to leave. They beat people up, especially those who could not run,” explained 60-year-old grandfather Lokuda Losil, who acquired his 30-acre plot in 1973. “We ran in a group, my children, my grandchildren, my wife and me. It was such a painful time because the eviction was so forceful and violent.”



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on September 26, 2011

Now, Losil and his family — eight children and six grandchildren — have nothing. “I have lost what I owned. Where I am now, my kids cry every day. I cannot sustain them and they do not go to school,” he told Oxfam. “Even eating has become a problem.”

The group’s report is filled with similarly tragic testimony from people whose lives were destroyed. And Western newspapers who sent reporters to the area discovered even more brutality.

The *New York Times*, for example, [reported](#) that “villagers described gun-toting soldiers and an 8-year-old child burning to death when his home was set ablaze by security officers.” Other victims told of marauding hordes burning down communities, brutalizing residents, and threatening to shoot anyone who hesitated.

“But in this case, the government and the company said the settlers were illegal and evicted for a good cause: to protect the environment and help fight global warming,” the *Times* reported.

The company, meanwhile, claimed the climate-driven evictions were done “voluntarily and peacefully.” In an interview with Al Jazeera, New Forests Company Chairman Robert Devereux [insisted](#) his company was “extremely socially responsible” while denying the documentation in Oxfam’s report.

“What our responsibility is, is to try and ensure — to the best of our ability — that [the evictions] take place humanely,” he explained. “I believe we did that.”

But the victims see it much differently, unanimously telling investigators horror stories of brutality, shootings, wanton destruction of livelihoods, and more. “The communities Oxfam spoke to describe the evictions as anything but voluntary or peaceful,” the report noted.

Despite downplaying the brutality, the World Bank- and EU-backed company still tried to distance itself from the process used to remove the farmers: “Evictions from government land — which go on in Uganda every day — are solely in the hands of the government and its designated authorities,” New Forests Company officials claimed. “We are expressly prohibited from dialogue and interaction from any illegal encroachers.”

So far, none of the affected villagers has been compensated for the loss of their homes and livelihoods — let alone the abuses, according to reports. New Forests Company claims the Ugandan government prohibits offering compensation to the victims. It remains unclear what, if anything, authorities are doing to provide restitution.

“Today, the people evicted from the land are desperate, having been driven into poverty and landlessness,” Oxfam noted in its report. “They say they were not properly consulted, have been offered no adequate compensation, and have received no alternative land.”

The group’s research estimates the number of victims at around 22,500, although the number could be “substantially higher,” it said. “They had functioning village and government structures, such as local council systems, schools, health centers, churches, permanent homes, and farms on which they grew crops to feed themselves and surpluses to sell at market. They paid taxes. Theirs were strong and thriving permanent communities.”

During government meetings in Uganda about the evictions, at least some high-ranking officials dissented. “These acts against our citizens should stop immediately. Investment is only good if the residents benefit from it,” the Lands Minister said in 2009. “Human beings are more important than trees.”

The chair of one of the affected districts sent a letter to the Ugandan Prime Minister calling for an end



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to the “brutal and forceful evictions.” But they went ahead anyway — even after the High Court ordered them temporarily halted.

Oxfam is calling on the company and its financial backers — the EU’s European Investment Bank, the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation, and some private investors such as HSBC — to investigate the atrocities and make the findings public. The charity is also demanding not only a transparent process to compensate the victims for their losses and the abuses suffered, but also a reform of policies so that similar abuses do not happen again.

“Oxfam believes that the affected communities in Kiboga and Mubende deserve to have their case heard and to see justice done,” the report concluded. “In Oxfam’s view, NFC and its financial backers must be held to account for the lost livelihoods and shattered lives of families evicted from the land they farmed.”

Following a wave of outrage and damning worldwide publicity, the British company said it would conduct an investigation. It remains unclear whether the UN, the EU, and other supranational bodies will continue to aggressively push “carbon trading” as a means of dealing with [discredited theories about the supposed effects of human activity](#) on global warming.

Ironically, the UN had predicted there would be some 50 million “climate refugees” by 2010. Instead, the regions cited by the global body’s Environment Program (UNEP) as being at risk [witnessed soaring population levels](#). The only true climate refugees, it seems, are the poor farmers being kicked off their land to make way for plantations generating “carbon credits.”

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Photo: Sharing Ugandans’ plight: Somalis from southern Somalia carrying their belongings make their way to a new camp for internally displaced people in Mogadishu Somalia, July, 28, 2011: AP Images



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