



Press Release

FIAN Zambia urges Government of the United States of America to support Government of Zambia to respect, protect and promote economic, social and cultural rights

Lusaka, 29th March, 2023. FIAN International-Zambia commends the United States (US) Government through the office of the US Vice President Kamala Harris for visiting Zambia and officiating the Summit for Democracy that Zambia is hosting.

As FIAN Zambia, we believe that relations among countries such as the United States of America (USA) and Zambia can only be strengthened when both countries share common values and principles such as respecting, promoting and protecting human rights especially Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR).

Both the US and Zambia have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and all other treaties relevant to the right to food and nutrition, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This means that, under the international human rights obligations, the two Governments have the duty to guarantee the enjoyment of the right to food and nutrition, and other connected rights.

However, despite this fact, a lot of Zambians are not enjoying the ICESCR including the right to food and nutrition. One of the most pressing challenges that the Zambian citizens are facing is that businesses are suppressing their rights.

Having worked with communities for more than four years to secure peoples access to the resources that they need in order have health lives, we have noted with great concern that violations of people's rights especially the right to a live in a safe and healthy environment is often violated by businesses. Examples of businesses that have violated the rights of the citizens include the case of Dangote Cement in Masaiti District, Copperbelt Province.

Dangote Cement Industries expressed interest to acquire land and invest in Chief Chiwala's Chiefdom located in Masaiti District of Zambia. In 2010, it was decided by Senior Chief Chiwala that 400 households in Majariwa village would be displaced to pave the way for construction of the Dangote Cement Industries Zambia Limited.

On April 15, 2014, Dangote Quarries Zambia Limited was granted another piece of land in extent of 247,8010 hectares and a certificate of title was issued by the Government of Zambia. The mining license and certificates of title issued to Dangote Quarries Zambia Limited and Dangote Industries Zambia Limited, were issued to them in form of land which was occupied and used as a residence and farming purposes by the affected community members and their generations before.

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Customary land of 250 ha belonging to 234 households was grabbed by Chief Chiwala and given to Dangote Industries Zambia Limited to build the factory. So far no compensation has been made and all 234 households do not have land to cultivate.

The case of Dangote Industries is just one of the examples that FIAN Zambia has documented. One way in which such cases can be eliminated and avoided is by ensuring that the government of Zambia through all line ministries must play their role in respecting, protecting and promoting human rights.

Therefore, as world leaders gather to talk about democracy, human rights and corruption, we would like to urge the US government to support the Zambian Government to respect, promote and protect the Economic Social and Cultural Rights. This will strengthen the protection against forced evictions in accordance with the criteria established by the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights interpreted in line with UNDROP.

Furthermore, we call upon the US government to also support the government of Zambia and share experiences on the importance of domesticating the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The amendment of Zambia's Supreme Law of the Land (Constitution) to include Economic, Social and Cultural Rights will allow assessment of compensation under the Ministry of Agriculture-Zambia to ensure that criteria for assessment of compensation for affected persons under customary land should be the same as affected persons under state/titled land. This will contribute to the realization and recognition of the Economic Social and Cultural Rights including the right to food and nutrition, right to water and healthy environment.

In conclusion, allow me to again commend and acknowledge the US government for visiting Zambia and officiating the Summit for Democracy. As a human rights organization that advocates for the right to food and nutrition and exposes violations of people's rights to food and related rights and stands up against undue and oppressive practices that prevent people from feeding themselves, we believe that the US visit to Zambia will birth recognition of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that people in the Zambia MUST freely enjoy.

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