

October 30, 2018

H. E. Dr. John Magufuli  
President  
The United Republic of Tanzania  
Tanzania

Dear President Magufuli,

First, let me express my appreciation for your leadership, your commitment to the common good and your championing of justice for the people of the United Republic of Tanzania, and more especially looking out for the welfare of the vulnerable and those, as Pope Francis puts it, "people on the margins of society."

Before I proceed, permit me to introduce myself. My name is Aniedi Okure; the Executive Director of Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN – [www.afjn.org](http://www.afjn.org)), a Washington-based pan-African religious organization dedicated to advancing just policies between the United States and African countries, working to promote the truth and good image of Africa among the American public and working with grassroots communities in Africa to inculcate the values of the common good.

During the week of October 7-13, 2018 I and my AFJN colleague Sr. Eucharika Madueke, participated at the gathering of the Tanzanian Association of Catholic Sisters (TCAS) from the Dioceses of Southern Highland Regions of Tanzania at the Monastery of Kamalidolis, Mafinga. Among other things, the sisters prayed and reflected together on the challenges arising from large scale investments in the agricultural sector and ways these impacted local communities and their families in Tanzania.

As part of their gathering and reflection, and believing that prayers accompanied by good works is even more pleasing to God, they sisters visited many local communities in the Southern Island area for fact-finding mission and to mediate on behalf of our vulnerable sisters and brothers who are impacted by agribusiness enterprise.

I was given the opportunity to accompany the sisters to a meeting in Muwimbi, a village in Iringa District where the villagers complained that an investor has confiscated the water from River Msugulika to irrigate the investor's commercial farm in addition to disrupting the local economy, family values and relationships.

During the meeting with the community, I heard complaints and laments that were disconcerting. The seizure of their water source has affected their cooking, washing clothes, and their personal hygiene. One man lamented; "I now wash occasionally, I smell and I am ashamed of myself." A woman in the assembly noted that she has been a traditional healer for years, using herbs from the acquired area. Since the acquisition, she has lost it all and is

unable to practice. Several women indicated that they used to collect fruits from the area and sell for family income but are not able to do so as the investor has put a wire fence around the area. This has also divided the village, making them travel long distance to go around the fence to do their normal chores. One man indicated that the investor employs women, almost exclusively. This has led to disruption in child upbringing and other household matters as the women leave early to work and come back late. This last issue sparked a conflict between men and women right in our presence. There were many more disturbing reports.

Following the meeting with the community, we accompanied the Catholic sisters to the said river, and sure enough the report by the villagers was true. The river was diverted and pumped to the farm. The following day, the sisters went to the District Commissioner of Iringa to bring the issue to his attention with the hope that the hardships brought upon the village would be addressed immediately.

From the complaints of the community and what I saw, it seems overall that there was no proper "Environmental Impact Assessment" prior to undertaking the project. Some members of the community complained that they objected to the deal but were threatened and coerced into surrendering.

Perhaps the District Commissioner has already attended to the needs of the community. However, given also what I observe in other communities across Africa, I feel compelled to bring this to the attention of Your Excellency, Mr. President, to act as you deem fit. It happens so often in many African countries that even where there are initial environmental impact assessments, once the deal is signed, and there is no continuous oversight, investors negate the terms of the contract and engage in activities that violate the basic rights of the community.

If I have bridged basic protocol in communicating this to your attention, I humbly ask that you overlook this shortcoming in favor of the welfare of the community traumatized by what is happening to them.

Thank you Mr. President.

With every good wish, I remain

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Aniedi Okure, OP  
Executive Director