**Retirees ask Lungu to intervene in eviction exercise**

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Household items left outside after a Kabulonga Secondary School retired teacher and his family were evicted by armed State and Council police officers around 01:00 hours on September 19, 2019 - Picture by Tenson Mkhala

Some retired civil servants from Malata compound in Lusaka have expressed concern over the continued evictions of retirees from public houses against a policy that sitting tenants can buy the properties.

And the residents, who say they have been occupying the houses for over 10 years, have lamented that Lusaka Province Minister Bowman Lusambo has been threatening them to leave their houses without listening to their plight.

But Lusambo says he cannot comment on this issue because it is in court.

The residents told News Diggers! in a walk-in interview, Monday, that contrary to what the Ministry of General Education is making the public believe, most retirees have not been paid.

“We are angered by the Ministry of General Education who have allowed retirees to be evicted from houses. After some retirees have been evicted, then the Ministry of Education issues a statement to say ‘all the retirees have been paid. As we speak now, four from Malata compound in Kabulonga have already been evicted. And they were evicted without being paid their repatriation fees. Only one of them was paid after being evicted. So we are worried,” the residents said.

They wondered why they had not been offered the houses when it was a policy that sitting tenants could buy them.

“When the policy to say ‘Zambian sitting tenants should be empowered’ everyone has been sold a house. Malata compound is surrounded by Kabulonga, Ibex Hill, Zamtel Flats, and some houses which were built in our presence have been sold. How come Malata sitting tenants are not being sold houses because according to the letter written by Ministry of Education permanent secretary in 2000, Malata was offered to sitting tenants to say that they should be sold. And even Ministry of Works and Supply also attested the same information. So now because this compound has been offered to sitting tenants for sale, we want to know who is blocking us from buying these houses?” they asked.

“Malata compound is not a teachers’ compound. People who live in Malata compound consist of drivers, general workers, and cleaners. From Ministry of General Education, that is where we had the staff dominating in that compound hence they are claiming to say it belongs to the Ministry of General Education. But we have no teachers who live in that compound. We have people from State House, Cabinet Office, Fisheries, Lands, Judiciary and other ministries, they all live in that compound. They have authorised that compound to be sold off but now there is someone who is sitting on the offer letters. Since 2000, someone has been sitting on the offer letters. The state declared that old houses should be sold to sitting tenants.”

They lamented that the eviction exercise was traumatizing.

“But then again the evictions are not good because we have served the government honourably. What they are doing now is they will come and give you an eviction notice and say ‘we want you to move out of this house within two weeks’ with an intent to bring in a relative or a friend or maybe someone who has offered something to them so that when he comes, they then legalize that compound,” the residents lamented.

The residents, who said they could not seek legal redress due to limited resources, appealed to President Edgar Lungu to intervene in the matter.

“Our friends who were occupying big houses have taken the matter to court but us we can’t. The eviction letters surprisingly are coming from Lusaka Province Minister Honourable Bowman Lusambo. He even came into the compound and threatened to say ‘I am coming, you shall see. I want all of you retirees to leave.’ And with the eviction, they don’t come during the day no, they come in the middle of the night. We are appealing to the President with his Christian heart if he can hear the Malata people. We have widows, orphans, and retirees. We want the president to intervene,” said the Malata residents.

But when contacted, Lusambo said he could not comment because the matter was already in court.

“That case is in court and we can’t talk about a matter which is in court. We can only talk about that after the court case. So, for now, there is nothing that we can discuss,” said Lusambo.

<https://diggers.news/local/2019/10/02/retirees-ask-lungu-to-intervene-in-eviction-exercise/>