

UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



LIMITED

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16 July 1952
ENGLISH
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COMMUNICATION FROM MR. KABONDO CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 24 and supplementary rule F of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council and in accordance with paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Report of the Committee on Examination of Petitions (T/L.243 and Corr.1) approved by the Trusteeship Council at its 397th meeting, on 13 March 1952, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Trusteeship Council and to the Government of Italy as the Administering Authority for the Trust Territory of Somaliland, a communication dated 26 June 1952 from Mr. Kabondo concerning the Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi.

52-42465

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26 June 1952

Sir,

My case was dealt with on 23 June 1952. Mr. Pétillon, the Vice-Governor-General, replied to my charge, and I am very grateful, for you told me what Mr. Pétillon said in his reply.

I was appointed Sub-Chief in 1932. I would like to ask you to consider carefully how badly I, and the others, were treated during that time. Having been appointed Sub-Chief, I had to be paid, but, though a Sub-Chief, I had a great deal of trouble to buy with my own money notebooks in which to register all those living on my hill. So it can be seen how badly the State treated us.

In order to write, one must, of course, have a table, ink and pen. All this a Sub-Chief bought with his own money, and taxes were always my responsibility. If the tax was not fair, I was in great danger of having to reimburse, whereas I received nothing by way of payment. Where is the justice in this?

In addition, I worked ~~as a judge~~ and also as an agronomist, watching over the fields on my hill. I did that for seven years without being paid.

Our payment was ten days of service for each person on the hill. I had 240 persons on my hill, and in a year I received 2,400 days in all. In the seven years during which I was a Sub-Chief, therefore, I received 16,800 days of service. I would ask you to take good note of the fact that my field of coffee bushes and my timber plantings were produced by the official service which I received for each person on my hill.

I planted these trees quite close to the official road, for I thought that I would later sell them to others, and the plantings close to my own house were only for firewood; they were not planted in anyone else's fields.

Mr. Pétillon said that the trees were planted on land in which I had no private rights. That is not true, since, as a Sub-Chief, I had a right to look for a plot of land on my hill. Moreover, I never planted my timber on anyone else's land; if I had I would have been prosecuted.

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As for the coffee plantation, it is said that I found it already planted. Yes, but that was not true, for the coffee plantation which I found was destroyed and afterwards I planted eucalyptus in its place. Afterwards I was shown another place near one of Semajara's fields, but it was not in his fields, as alleged. I wonder why my black friends are not against me, but only the government whites, who are in a hurry to make me die in poverty. You can, of course, re-read what Mr. Petillon said in reply in my case; but what I wished to say in reply to Mr. Petillon has been kept from you. Another reason which is obvious is that if a Sub-Chief has done wrong he must be made to leave his hill, and then the other Sub-Chief who replaces him receives only the coffee plantation but not the plantings of timber, for those are sold to the white people working in the mines and it is claimed that the money will remain in the indigenous welfare fund, but if one asks what benefit this money does to the indigenous inhabitants, none will be found. I should like you to ask Mr. Scheyven about this, for when I brought my charge he was at Usumbura as a State Judge. If the truth counts, therefore, he can tell you everything frankly.

There is a reason here which is very important and very sad for the inhabitants of Ruanda.

1. All the Banyarwanda are asking why they cannot have the freedom which is to be found in other countries which are like Ruanda. In Ruanda the State does not allow the indigenous inhabitants to build their dwellings with timber from a natural forest unless they pay 10,000 francs!!!

2. In Ruanda, the whites can always make the indigenous inhabitants move against their will without paying them a fair price. Many indigenous inhabitants cannot write, and they are forced to make their marks blindly and in great fear, and they are not told what they are entitled to receive as compensation for being moved.

3. Here in Ruanda no one has the right to build his dwelling as he wishes. For example, there is a place called Muhari where the National Park is; the indigenous inhabitants are not allowed to build their houses there, whereas a Belgian can.

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4. There are many Banyarwanda who go to Uganda. When they return with property which they have acquired with much difficulty, they are asked by the white officials at the customs to show what they have. This is a matter which should be treated sympathetically.

5. All the Banyarwanda are wondering why it is difficult to trade, especially in native beverages. If an indigenous inhabitant buys a beverage from someone without a license, the vendor is asked to pay a fine of 5,000 francs, an amount which a white person's employee does not earn in a month.

6. All the Banyarwanda wonder why it is that in the territory of Tanganyika there are no taxes on cattle and wives, although Ruanda-Orundi is in the same category as Tanganyika.

Furthermore, in some parts of the Belgian Congo, such as the territory of Kumu, there are many cattle on which no taxes are levied. If the Belgian Government is fair, we ask why we are badly treated.

To revert to the question of my coffee plantations, in 1936 I harvested 1,500 kilograms, so that during the 16 years in which I did not pick these coffee plantations, the total yield may be estimated at 24,000 kilograms.

As regards my timber plantings, some trees have already been felled, and even in May a number of trees were sold to the Somoki Company.

I should like to ask you to give my case a fair hearing and, as customary, without regard to colour.

As you know, a man, whether white, black or yellow, who has a family of three children and a wife must clothe and feed them. I had a family of three children and a wife, who are now separated from me, for the poverty caused by the bad treatment which I received at the hands of the State has prevented me from maintaining my family.

At the present time I am like a man whom God has cursed. I spend my time among friends who can give me a little help to buy clothes. There are 1,127 persons who have given me shelter. I would be very glad if you could help me to find a living without molestation by the State. I hope to receive a favourable reply if I am still in this life.

I have the honour etc.

(Signed) ... illegible ... Kabondo

Received at United Nations headquarters on 3 July 1952.
