

UNITED NATIONS TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL



LIMITED

T/COM.4/L.1
25 April 1952

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMUNICATION FROM MESSRS. MORI MUAMBO, M. ESUKA AND OTHERS CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

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 29 December 1951 from Messrs. Mori Muambo, M. Esuka and others, concerning the Trust Territory of the Cameroons under British administration.

COPY

British Cameroons,
Buea District,
Membea Village,
29th December, 1951

The Director of Prisons,
Lagos, N I G E R I A,
The Resident, Cam. Province,
The District Officer,
V i c t o r i a.

Unheeded complaints of atrocious
Farm destructions
by His Majesty's Prisoners.

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Sir,

On behalf and for our people, we the undersigned have the honour to bring the following complaint which has been an outstanding one for years.

That most of our farms situated on the Buea Hill have been from time to time destroyed wilfully by the prisoners and Warders of H.M. Convict Prison, Buea, under the pretence and cloak of searching firewoods for the use of Government officials in Buea Station.

This deplorable complaint has been from time to time reported to the Officer-in-Charge of H.M. Convict Prison, Buea, and other Authorities in the locality but no heed has been paid to that.

2. In March, 1949, one Mbela Woka (petitioner) met a great damage done on our farms by these prisoners in the knowledge of their respective warders, reported this to the police but this report was unheeded to. On account of this unheedlessness by the authority we decided to hire watchmen to catch these prisoners and then marching them to the police or to any other authority concerned. One ex-constable, George Fawty, a Bamendaman, volunteered to do the job accompanied by two women with a young man, Njia.

Fortunately, on the 23rd of August, 1949, they met these prisoners damaging the farms, in felling large trees and splitting them into firewoods, much cocoyam tubers were destroyed and others uprooted purposely to get the yams for their food
/which were partly

which were partly to be taken home and some times hid on the way and then strike bargain with people who can buy them whilst the rest were being roasted or cooked on the very spot.

On the very spot three extra boys who were the Warders' house servants were also found with these prisoners as the warder in charge of the prisoners was not there with them.

These prisoners were noted by George Fawty with the identification Nos. Y217, 227, 257 & 290. Mr. Fawty so bold and robust enough managed to get hold on them and seized a felling axe and three matchets from them which were intended to be shown to the police as exhibits.

After an hour's time of much noise at the spot one Warder, Joseph, in charge of the prisoners came to the scene and the damage was done to him. He the warder begged for the return of this axe with the three matchets, this was refused. The Warder told Mr. Fawty, our watchmen, that he himself could not settle the matter alone unless they all go to meet a 2nd Class Warder, Ntui, who could decide the matter satisfactorily. In the company of the Warder these four prisoners with the three Warder's servants were marched to meet the 2nd Class Warder to the wood camp which took them to a distance of about a quarter mile. There they met the 2nd Class Warder with some other convicts, Ndiva Litia, with ~~many~~ others roasting some cocoyams which were stolen from our farm. After the incident and statement were given to the 2nd Class Warder, Ntui, with another Warder met there, Bernard, our people now went and reported the whole story to the Officer-in-Charge H. M. Prison Buea. Mr. Fawty gave to the Officer names of the Warders involved to the matter as well as the identification numbers of the four prisoners mentioning also the three Warder's servants who managed to escape on the way after they were shown to the first Warder. The Officer-in-Charge promised to investigate the matter later on but after all he failed to do so, on purpose and even refused my suggestion to visit the farms and see personally the damage himself and to arrange for an identification parade.

3. On the 26th of August, 1949, the lady already named above, Eliza Nalova la Mbele in company of other women met a prisoner stealing cocoyams from one of our farms. The prisoner escaped in leaving the cocoyams behind him. This incident was also reported to the Officer i/c Prison while the cocoyams were taken to the police for action but nothing was done.

/4. On Monday

4. On Monday the 29th of August, our people, namely George Fawty, Mbel'a Woka and Moki mo Mwambo left for our farms to watch they hid themselves at a corner of the farm. They saw prisoners felling trees and splitting them into firewoods on the farms. Later a prisoner looked up but seeing nobody started rooting up cocoyam tubers. Mbela then came forward to apprehend him. The prisoner raised an alarm and as a result several prisoners and warders came up and assaulted our people George Fawty, however, managed to escape when he heard an order being given by the warders that he, George, should be singled out for severe flogging. Mbela and Moki were well beaten up and the warders, who were in charge of firewood gangs, arrested our people Moki and Mbela and dragged them before the Chief Warder to the Convict Prison where the Chief Warder directed the warders to take them to the Police Charge Office. On hearing of this incident, our brother, W.M. Mwambo, a servant under the N.A. Treasury Office, Buea, interviewed the Officer-in-Charge Prison in acquainting him with what was going on.

No attempt was however made by the police to send our people for medical examination with a view to ascertaining the extent of the injury sustained by them, Moki and Mbela were unable to hear well for some days after the beating. They attended the hospital on the next day onwards till the 31st of August when we reminded the Police Sergeant that a medical examination was necessary.

5. Early on August 30, our sister, Eliza Mbela, who went to her own farm was chased by prisoners on the allegation that she was uprooting cocoyam tubers on her own farm. This was doubtless a ruse to deflect the responsibility for the damage to our farms to a member of our family. As our sister was being chased, she cried for help. Our senior brother, Esos'a Mwambo, who happened to be working on his farm, came up to see what was happening and he was well flogged by both the prisoners and warders before the senior warder in charge of the wood gangs. When news of this "official atrocity" reached the Police Charge Office, a constable was detailed to investigate matters on the spot.

Another report was made by our brother, William Mwambo, to the Officer-in-Charge Prison to see something done to remedy the constant trouble arising between the warders, prisoners and the farm owners and the Officer made no good reply which can be quoted here. As Mr. Mwambo failed to be assuaged by the O.C. Prison he again went and approached the Senior Resident about the same trouble, the latter fixed hours and time on which both were to meet and to hear what the

/O.C. Prison

O.C. Prison would answer about the constant damage and trouble caused by the prisoners. When the Senior Resident was met he told our brother that the O.C. Prison was asked and said that "he had seen no evidence in the Police Case File to prove that his prisoners had stolen any cocoyams although the farms on September 4th, 1949 (Sunday) in order to satisfy himself as to the extent of the alleged damage done by his prisoners, this he did".

6. On Monday the 5th September, 1949, a trickish identification parade was arranged by the police whereas the people who could truly identify the habitual culprits immediately after the incident of August 23rd were not allowed to do so. The Prisoners who were actively concerned in the cocoyam thefts were not produced and therefore our sister could only identify the prisoner who did not take part in the actual theft although he was a member of the wood-cutting gang.

7. It is quite useless to repeat counting dates of subsequent incidents followed after this false identification parade which had justified the warders and prisoners' allegation of damages being done on our farms.

Since that time our people and women have been living in terror, threats and menaces of being kidnapped on our farms and be severely flogged or be falsely accused as it once happened with our sister and brother, or to be committed to prison, see mention of this in para. 5 above.

From that time unto this day women only go to their farms in great number to avoid this trouble which awaits them in store. And on the day that women fail to be seen on their farms it will be a fair chance by prisoners and warders to collect enough food, carried home and sometimes hidden for the next day to be taken home. As the warders' servants were seen and arrested, now the plan of their taking foods from our farms is that they are kept far from the farms and wait there until all food is brought by prisoners and then they take over from the latter.

As we failed to be assuaged by the Authority concerned we planned to brief out a solicitor in this matter. The solicitor asked us to give him the total amount of what we shall claim being damages done on our farms.

The followings were what we had calculated:-

- (a) 359 "Mother" cocoyam stems or tubers uprooted and others damaged by fallen trees. The stems were strewn all over the farms. These were witnessed by the O.C. Prison, Buea, on the 4th of September, '49.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| (b) 1 large pear tree | (felled on our farms and |
| (c) 2 large trees | (used for firewood by |
| (d) 65 medium-sized trees | (the Buea Prison. |

Our claim was as follows-

(a) at 5/-per stem.....	£89.15.0d
(b) at 8/-	8.0d
(c) at 15/- each	1.10.0d
(d) at 5/- each	16. 5.0d
	<hr/>
	£107.18.0d

After we had calculated this in undervaluing the potential value of the tubers which the 359 would have yielded during the current year, we feared to hand the matter over to the solicitor thinking how the Authority concerned would firmly stand to defend the prisoners to avoid a world shame we refrained to do because the false identification parade which was arranged was to safeguard their witting defence. And now that we have not done anything to avert this trouble our suffering is twofold and is ever increasing unchecked.

Where is then now our peace and freedom under the Union Jack while our entire lives are now at stake? We are to die from hunger to-morrow in order to save the prisoners of His Majesty's Government.

We have the honour, etc & etc,

Your obedient petitioners,

Writer/Soppo.
Fee 40/- (Forty)

(Signed) L. Muambo s/ M. Esuka

Copy to -
The Governor of Nigeria,
The Sec-General, UNO.

" Mbele Woka s/ Mwaye Ikome

"... (Illegible) s/ Ngeke Nyime

"... (Illegible) (thumb print)

(thumb print)

8. In September, 1951, one Masoke ma Ndumbe of Soppo-Vonganga, a member of our family went to the hill (well) in cutting and splitting cardboards for building purpose. As he was met working alone near farms, the Warder in charge of the gang, Clement Bonda, ordered the prisoners to catch him, after he was well beaten, was taken to the Police Office, Buea, and locked up there for three days. With no investigation of the case why he was caught and locked up for he was quietly released.

/In the whole

In the whole three days that Ndumbe was locked up by the Nigerian Police, no one of his family knew anything of this story and people had to make a great search of him here and there. It was on the third day that people were hinted of his whereabouts and in the evening released for fear that the police had had no reason to show why he was locked up for.

The weight of our complaints and sufferings partly put down here, as ignored by the Administering Authority, show how we are not safe nor secure under the British flag, laws, and protection although the Administering Authority is boasting on the yearly Reports to the UNO how we are properly cared, protected and governed here. The services of both the Nigerian Police and officials towards us the weak and illiterate people of this Trust Territory are indiscriptable, cruel and unbearable. Ndumbe could be accidentally killed both by the Warders and policemen through severe beatings as mention of this is made in para 4 (four) above but the Government could do nothing other than defending the Warders and the policemen.

Can a civilized nation in the world today say "we the petitioners are safe and secure while our people can be kidnapped, locked up and released with no case?"

We now suffer from many threats, insults and oppressions which our forefathers did not know. In any small case that happens between us and the Government (official), we cannot resist satisfactorily nor raise any voice as the ever ready laws and ordinances, which we do not know, are immediately quoted to barricade our own sedimentary strife and right.

9. The O/C Prison at the time as mentioned in para 6 above was Mr. O.G. Cudmore.

Hopefully we believe that this "trouble" which lies in our store, now having reached the Supreme Authorities "it will be stamped out utterly and never to be dreamed again" as we shall only look forward for the compensation of our food and economic trees mentioned under para 7 of this letter.

Es. Woletae,
Letter Writer
and
Historian of Southern Cameroons.

Humble Petitioners,
(Signed) Moki Muambo
(Signed) M.E.Suka