

PLAYGROUND SAGA

Ombudsman probing Lang'ata saga

By BRIGID CHEMWENO

The Commission on Administrative Justice is investigating the irregular acquisition of land adjacent to Lang'ata Primary School in Nairobi.

The commission further initiated investigations into the use of force by the police, conduct of other public officers including the school head, area MP and officers involved in the transfer of land and acquisition of the contested piece of land.

The commission, which is also called the office of the Ombudsman, has since written to the Acting Inspector General of Police Samuel Arachi and the National Land Commission Chairman Muhammad Swazuri.

"An incident occurred on Monday involving the public, pupils of Lang'ata Primary School and the police and it is alleged that the police may have used undue procedure, excessive force and inappropriate methods in handling the matter.

The entire scenario demonstrated gross misconduct by the police and other relevant public officers," the commission noted in the letter to Arachi.

The Ombudsman commended the Office of the Inspector General for taking preliminary measures against the relevant police officers connected to the matter.

Communications Director Phoebe Nadupoi said the commission had received complaints regarding the allegations of irregular acquisition of land belonging to the school.

"The Office of the Ombudsman will investigate the matter including how and when the parcel was acquired, who acquired the same and which public officers were involved in the acquisition and authorisation.

Upon finalisation of the investigations we shall prepare a report with clear findings and recommendations for remedial action," said Ms Nadupoi.

The letter to Swazuri was copied to Lands Principal Secretary Mariamu El Maawy, while the one to Arachi was copied to Interior and Co-ordination of National Government Cabinet Secretary Joseph Nkaissery and the head teacher of Lang'ata Road primary school.

Lands Cabinet Secretary Charity Ngilu (left) addresses a press conference at Ardhi House in Nairobi yesterday regarding the Lang'ata Road Primary School land ownership dispute. With her is National Land Commission commissioner Dr Rose Musyoka. The CS said together with NLC, they will repossess all public land grabbed by private developers.

(PHOTO: ANDREW KILONZI/STANDARD)



Ngilu names directors of housing firm that 'grabbed' school land

...as NLC threatens to propose legal action against the four bosses of Airport View Housing Limited

By MOSES NJAGIH

Lands Cabinet Secretary Charity Ngilu has revealed the four directors of the housing company alleged to have grabbed the Lang'ata Primary School playground, even as the National Land Commission (NLC) threatened to recommend legal action against them.

After days of probe trying to unmask the faces behind the Airport View Housing Limited, Ngilu yesterday produced documents from the Registrar of Companies giving details of the four, who are the registered di-

rectors, at least as at October 31, 2013.

The CS named Mandip Singh Amrit, who has 1000 shares, Harbans Singh Amrit (3,000), Kamal Prakash Amrit, (1,000) and Manjit Singh Amrit, who as at the date did not have any share, as the directors of the housing firm. According to the response that Ngilu received from the Registrar of Companies, the four were registered as using the same postal address of 45403 - 00100, with their registered offices based at Jasmine Centre on Waiyaki Way in Nairobi.

The CS said contrary to accusations levelled against her office that they were protecting the land grabbers, she only wanted to ensure she got the right information on the ownership of the housing company.

"I did not want to just name people carelessly. That is why I had to write to the Registrar to get the list of the directors," said Ngilu during a press briefing yesterday at her Ardhi House offices.

Ngilu said together with the NLC, they were going to repossess all public

land grabbed by private developers, urging institutions whose property has been encroached to immediately report to the Lands office. "The greatest loser is the person in possession of a title deed that was illegally acquired. We are not going to talk to those who have grabbed land but we will only swing into action," she said.

NLC Vice Chair Abigael Mukolwe urged those who have grabbed public institutions' land to start bringing buildings down, saying the commission will swiftly move into action once such reports are filed with them.

On the Langata land, Ms Mulokwe said the commission had revoked the title deed of the housing company af-

"I did not want to just name people carelessly. That is why I had to write to the Registrar to get the list of the directors-Lands CS Charity Ngilu

ter finding it to be illegal. She further said they could recommend criminal prosecution or further investigation of the directors of the housing firm.

"We are given powers to revoke or regularise titles that we find were illegally acquired, but we can also recommend to CID to further investigate such a case like this or even ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to institute criminal proceedings against such characters," she said.

Ngilu further expressed outrage over the manner in which activists abused the rights of the pupils by urging them to take part in protests. "I am a mother and was deeply disturbed by the sight of children being tear-gassed. But questions must also be asked about the conduct of the activists who chose to use children. In their impatience and carelessness, they chose to violate the constitutional rights of the children and expose them to risk," said Ngilu.

Unicef condemns use of tear gas on Lang'ata Road pupils

By CYRUS OMBATI

United Nations Children's Education Fund (Unicef) has expressed concern over the use of teargas by police on school children demonstrating against the grabbing of their playground.

The organisation said the right to play is every child's right. Safe places must be created for all children to play. They also said adults have a responsibility to safeguard the rights of

all children to have a voice and to be protected from harm.

"It contributes to a child's healthy development and builds physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills. Skills that will be so critical in later life, not only for the child but for Kenya if Vision 2030 is to be realised," said the fund in a statement.

It said the right is articulated in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Clergy condemn police action on pupils

By PETER OCHIENG

Clerics in the North Rift region have condemned Monday's police use of teargas against innocent pupils of Lang'ata Road Primary School in Nairobi.

Bishop Cornelius Korir of Eldoret Catholic Diocese regretted the police action terming it "unfortunate".

"Police are also parents and custodians of security in the country. They should have been sensitive to the young children by not using excessive force while dispersing demonstrators," said Korir.

Reacting to the incident yesterday, the cleric voiced concern, say-

ing the police should have investigated those behind the grabbing of public utilities instead of using excessive force against harmless children.

The bishop also urged the Government to carry out survey work and speed up issuance of title deeds to public primary and secondary schools.

SCHOOL LAND

He said the Ministry of Education should facilitate the process of safeguarding land belonging to learning institutions.

"The only effective way to protect public utilities is to ensure that they

have proper ownership documents to stop fraudsters from grabbing them," the bishop said.

The bishop also urged leaders to seek an amicable solution to the land issue and avoid politicising the matter.

And Eldoret Diocese Anglican Church Bishop Christopher Ruto said what the police did to the young children was inhuman and "taking the country to the dark days".

"What we saw in our local television stations and newspapers is shocking because such police misbehavior was witnessed long time ago in South Africa," Ruto added.