

Truckers want container deadline extended after attacks in S Sudan

► Freight associations condemn attacks and killing of truck drivers on Nimule-Juba highway.

► Currently, shipping lines allow retention of empty containers for South Sudan for 14-15 days.

BENARD SANGA AND PETERSON GITHAIGA, MOMBASA

Custom agents are seeking an extension of time to return empty containers of Southern Sudan-bound cargo by 15 days so that they are not penalised for the delay.

Currently, shipping lines allow retention for 14-15 days.

The Kenya International Freight and Warehousing Association (Kifwa) are citing insecurity at Elegu border between South Sudan and Uganda that has affected flow of traffic. Hauliers have pulled out their trucks from the route.

Kifwa now wants the days extended to 30, according to a letter to the industry regulator, the Kenya Maritime Authority (KMA).

Most of the trucks have dropped South Sudan-bound cargo at the Uganda side of the border because of insecurity along the Nimule-Juba highway.

Last month, bandits killed two Kenyan drivers on the road.

"There are over 3,000 trucks stuck at the Elegu border and a major humanitarian crisis only comparable to a war situation or Covid-19 border crisis is unfolding," Kifwa Chairman Roy Mwanthi wrote in letter dated September 2.

"Kifwa members will suffer major costs from demurrages associated with the delays in cargo delivery and return of empty containers released to them by shipping lines/agencies because of this force majeure."

The Federation of East African Forwarders Associations (Feaffa), the umbrella body of clearing agents



South Sudan Freight Forwarders Association President Emmanuel Kachoul Mayen (right) with Kenya Truck Drivers Union Chairman Nicholas Mbugua in Mlolongo, Machakos County, yesterday. [Peterson Githaiga, Standard]

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Roy Mwanthi, KIFWA Chairman

in East Africa, has also condemned the attacks on long-distance truck drivers ferrying cargo to South Sudan and sought extension for return of empty containers.

"The ongoing insecurity along this corridor has hampered cargo

transportation, depriving multitudes of their daily livelihoods while withdrawing enormous investment in terms of trucks and cargo out of the regional economy, including South Sudan," Feaffa said.

This situation has significant implications for the logistics sector, including increased container demurrage, short supply of containers as they remain stuck at the border and or in Juba, further escalating a situation already worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The federation appealed to the South Sudan government to make good its promise to provide security along the Juba-Nimule corridor. The federation also wants a mechanism instituted for compensating cargo owners, transporters and freight forwarders for the lives and cargo lost as well as trucks destroyed by

the assailants.

The South Sudan government has promised to provide security to Kenya truck drivers stranded at the border.

In a letter to the Kenya embassy, South Sudan said the escort will be provided by the Southern Sudan People's Defense Force and the South Sudan National Police Service.

"Our government is committed to sustain this safety measures and we are advising all the road users to adhere to the government escort directives, all the obstacles that caused delay in the highway to Juba will be removed," reads the letter.

Meanwhile, the South Sudan Freight Forwarders Association, Business Community in East Africa and the Kenya Truck Drivers Union have condemned the attacks on drivers.

Forwarders association president Emmanuel Kachoul Mayen and the union chairman Nicholas Mbugua held a press conference in Mlolongo, Machakos, where they called on the government to protect the drivers.

"It's barbaric, evil and not accepted in our culture to kill innocent drivers who are working day and night to supply essentials goods from Mombasa port to South Sudan," said Mayen.

He urged the rebels to stop the attack on unarmed drivers only making a living.

Mayen said they suspect the rebels want to disrupt the supply chain from Mombasa to Juba and discourage the business community and South Sudan citizens using the Port of Mombasa to move their cargo either to the Port of Sudan or any other place.

"I urge the Kenya Ports Authority and the Kenya Revenue Authority to work closely with South Sudan government and the private sector to ensure the safety of the drivers. Striking or impounding trucks carrying fresh goods is a big loss to the business community," he said.

Mbugua called for compensation for lives and property lost.

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MISSING CASH

Woman says police took Sh50,000 fine by false pretence

Caren Wekesa, a resident of Korogoch, Eldama Ravine in Baringo, claims she lost Sh50,000 to a senior police officer who took advantage of her naivety.

According to Ms Wekesa, her husband Daniel Njuguna was arrested and arraigned in court for allegedly being in possession of 19 rolls of bhang valued at Sh2,000.

She claimed Njuguna pleaded guilty to the offense and was fined Sh50,000 or serve six month in jail.

Out of ignorance, she raised the Sh50,000 fine and instead of paying it to the Judiciary as required by law, she took it to Makutano Police Station and handed it over to a senior police officer.

"On August 12, my husband was released, only to be re-arrested three days later by police after a Prisons officer identified him," she said.

According to her, the warder said Njuguna was to be transferred to Nakuru Prison but was missing from Makutano Police Station where he was being held. She reported the matter to the Eldama Ravine sub-county police commander but no action was taken against the officer who allegedly took the cash.

Police spokesman Bruno Shioso told The Standard he was not aware of the incident but promised to establish the facts.

Kimutai Kirui, a rights activist, claimed cases of police being involved in illegal activities were rampant. "It is sad police are now handling cases in a kangaroo court," he claimed.

County police commander Robinson Ndiwa declined to comment. "I've handed it over to higher authorities. The police spokesperson can respond," Ndiwa said. **[Yvonne Chepkwony]**

DEFILEMENT

Police face action for holding minor

The Independent Police Oversight Authority (Ipoa) is investigating the circumstances under which a defilement victim was locked up in police cells for six days while the suspect was set free.

At the same time, police have begun a manhunt for the man who allegedly defiled the 13-year-old.

Police spokesman Bruno Shioso yesterday told The Standard that action would be taken against the officer commanding Kabarnet Police Station and any other officers involved. Shioso said Ipoa is seized of the matter.

"Action is being taken against the officers involved," he said. The suspect was allegedly found with the minor in his house on August 23. He was handed over to the police but later released.

Baringo Deputy Police Commander Joseph Argut said the girl was held after she failed to reveal what transpired. IPOA took statements from the girl and her mother. **[Yvonne Chepkwony]**

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Ombudsman to monitor institutions' websites

The Office of Ombudsman is developing a software to monitor websites of private and public institutions to ensure they are not withholding critical information from the public.

The Commission on Administrative Justice vice-chairman Washington Sati said this will help identify those who violate the Access to Information Act, 2016.

Speaking in Kakamega during a public forum on administrative justice yesterday, Sati said the law

gave institutions three years to digitise information in an easy-to-read language, and accessible even by the blind.

Last year, the Ombudsman received at least 10,356 complaints against institutions and individuals accused of failing to disclose public information.

The institutions were also accused of delays, inaction, ineptitude and discourtesy.

"The people have the right to know how their

government, from the counties to the national level, is run," said Sati.

"In this ear of coronavirus pandemic, for instance, people need to know what kind of vaccine is offered at what hospital, even if it's private, and from where it was sourced. Such information must be made public for the good of the masses and that's why we are devising a monitoring tool to help us zero in on those who are not complying with the Act," said Sati. **[Robert Amalemba]**