



**International Refugee
Rights Initiative**



Refugee Law Project

MASS REMOVAL OF RWANDANS FROM UGANDAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS

Reports reaching IRRI and RLP indicate that on the morning of Wednesday 14th July 2010, OPM Directorate of Refugees and Police officers in Nakivale (Isingiro District) and Kyaka II (Kyenjonjo District) began rounding up Rwandans and forcing them against their will to board trucks to return them to Rwanda.

Reports indicate that those targeted in this manner were lured with the promise that they would be granted refugee status and food. Instead they were met by a large number of Ugandan police who rounded them up and forced them onto trucks. Shots were fired by police. Some individuals appear to have been injured during the process, and in some cases parents were separated from children. Reports further suggest that Rwandan security agents and authorities were present at the scene.

By removing settlement-based Rwandans in this manner, the Ugandan government is in breach of its own Citizenship and Immigration Act, which outlines the due processes by which failed asylum seekers who have exhausted their right of appeal should be deported. It has also violated the obligations created by domestic and international law, including the Constitution, the Children's Statute and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These breaches come just days before the African Union Summit on 'Maternal, Infant and Child Health and Development in Africa' is due to begin in Kampala.

IRRI and RLP condemn this forcible removal of Rwandans from Ugandan refugee settlements. We further note that this comes barely a month after our drawing public attention to the fact that many Rwandan refugees and asylum seekers fear persecution if returned to their country of origin (see report titled, "A Dangerous Impasse: Rwandan Refugees in Uganda" available on www.refugeelawproject.org and www.refugee-rights.org). The report made a number of recommendations to the governments of Uganda and Rwanda, and to UNHCR, in order to improve protection for this group of refugees. In particular, it stated that the Ugandan government must scrupulously uphold its international and national legal obligations with regard to the protection of refugees and to the truly voluntary nature of any repatriation.

We therefore call for an immediate halt to the current removal process. We also call on the Ugandan government to ensure that any failed asylum seekers are able to exhaust the appeal processes provided for under the Refugees Act, and, where these routes have indeed been exhausted, that the Government follow due process for deportation as provided for under the Citizenship and Immigration Control Act.

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