

War vet feasts on Tyson's oranges

The Zimbabwe Standard by Andrew Kunambura

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MAZOWE district war veterans chairman Ephanos Mudzimunyi is harvesting where he did not sow as he defies a High Court order barring him from interfering with operations at a sprawling farm belonging to former Local Government minister Saviour Kasukuwere.

Mudzimunyi has instead intensified harvesting oranges belonging to the exiled former Zanu PF national political commissar.

The High Court last Tuesday quashed government's decision to seize part of Kasukuwere's Cornucopia * farm in Mazowe and issued an interdict barring any interference with activities at the property.

Despite the court order, Mudzimunyi has continued harvesting oranges at Lot 2, the best portion of the farm adjacent to the perennial Mazowe River, which he was allocated by Agriculture and Lands minister Perrance Shiri late last year.

Shiri wrote to Kasukuwere in November last year informing him that government had decided to repossess part of his farm, measuring 130 hectares, arguing it was part of government's programme to downsize huge farms.

However, there have been concerns that this was part of efforts by President Emmerson Mnangagwa's administration to victimise his political opponents.

Kasukuwere was a key member of the G40 faction that was targeted by a military coup in November 2017 that saw the ouster of the late former president Robert Mugabe from power.

Kasukuwere then filed an urgent chamber application at the High Court seeking an order barring the government from taking over the farm, which High Court judge Justice Webster Chinamhora granted on Tuesday last week.

Petrified workers at the farm told The Standard yesterday that Mudzimunyi actually chased away police officers escorting Kasukuwere's representatives when they went to the farm to serve him a copy of the High Court ruling before hiring more workers to speed up the harvesting of oranges.

"Until Thursday last week, they had only been eating the oranges.

"But since the court order was granted, (Mudzimunyi) has hired more people to harvest the oranges.

"They spend the day harvesting and packing them and transporting them in trucks overnight," a farm employee, who declined to be identified for fear of victimisation, said.

"They even chased away police officers who had come to serve them the court order and said they did not regard it.

"When the order came, some workers tried to harvest the oranges from the other end, but they were threatened by Mudzimunyi's people, who warned them that the move was tantamount to a declaration of war and they retreated."

Another senior employee said the invasion of the farm had left all operations frozen.

"This is a big loss. They are harvesting the portion with the best crop and also some common criminals have taken advantage of that to steal.

"Now all operations have stalled," he said.

"There is no irrigation taking place because they are camped right at the pump and have declared it a no-go area.

"This is happening at a time when we are supposed to be irrigating the oranges more to come up with the best quality."

The employee added that they were also unable to apply the necessary chemicals.

"This has left the oranges exposed to fruit flies, which causes extensive damage," he said.

In a telephone interview from his South Africa base yesterday, Kasukuwere said the defiance of a court order showed lack of respect for the rule of law in Zimbabwe.

Kasukuwere said he would continue seeking legal recourse.

"When we received the letter of withdrawal from the minister of Lands, I responded in terms of the law," he said.

"I went to the High Court and was granted an interdict against anyone disturbing the farming operations till such time the matter has been set down and heard.

"I have been farming since 2000 and have made massive investments over the years and 400 families draw their livelihoods from the farm.

“I have abided by the law and we request that everyone respects the law.”

Kasukuwere, known as Tyson, during his time in Zanu PF, said Mudzimunyi and Mashonaland Central provincial war veterans chairperson Sam Parirenyatwa had been disturbing operations at his farm in complete disregard of the court order.

“He is now harvesting our crop and selling it,” he said.

“He just turned up at harvest time and has settled with his wife and children in the field.

“They are busy harvesting and selling the oranges and this is daylight robbery.

“The ZRP seem constrained to bring order and quite clearly it’s political.

“It is not in the interests of our nation that we continue to use this resource as a political tool.

“Any disagreements should never be handled in this manner.

“This is being done at the expense of production. Let’s respect our own laws.

“The current legal construction is ours and the least one can do is uphold it.

“This level of avarice, vindictiveness and persecution is counterproductive.

“I will continue to seek the court’s intervention and will abide by the ruling of our courts.”

When The Standard crew visited Lot 2 of the farm around midday yesterday, Mudzimunyi and his group, including women with babies strapped on their backs, were busy harvesting oranges.

Some of them were even scaling the thorny trees to reach for the outlying fruit.

Some were briskly packing oranges into pockets and stashing them in heaps for outward transportation.

Mudzimunyi claimed his occupation of the thriving property was legal.

“It was allocated to me by government in the same manner that agricultural land in this country is distributed,” he said, brandishing a copy of an offer letter dated March 4, 2020 and signed by Shiri.

He also said there was nothing wrong with him harvesting the fruits, arguing that the land and everything on it became his from the hour that he received the offer letter.

“If you go to the Ministry of Lands right now, this section of the land has my name on it, which means it is mine.

“Kasukuwere must stop crying foul. When he came here, he found these plants there and started harvesting soon after he obtained the offer letter,” the war veteran said.

“So that’s simply what I am doing here. If he has problems with it, then the law is clear on what he should do.

“He must quantify his losses and take them to government for compensation.”

He declined to entertain questions about the High Court ruling saying: “I am not going to discuss a court process that I was not even called to testify in.

“As far as I am concerned, I am the legal occupant of this piece of land.”

Mnangagwa has been accused of being vengeful after other former G40 members, notably former Information minister Jonathan Moyo and former Youth minister Patrick Zhuwao, were also served with notices of eviction from their farms.

Several ministers linked to Mugabe were forced to flee the country after the November 2017 military coup.

<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2020/05/17/war-vet-feasts-tysons-oranges/>

***Conucopia farm – background:**

On 8 March 2006, the Financial Gazette in Zimbabwe reported in an article titled: “Kasukuwere grabs Interfresh farm”, that Deputy Youth Development Minister and Mount Darwin South Member of Parliament Saviour Kasukuwere has wrested the lucrative Cornucopia Farm Orchard from Interfresh Limited.

The Financial Gazette noted that “The takeover of Cornucopia - constituting 19 percent of Mazoe Citrus Estate (MCE)'s citrus plantations - might deprive the publicly listed Interfresh of prime assets valued at over \$108 billion plus earnings running into several billions of dollars....”

To read the complete article:

https://www.zimbabwesituation.com/old/mar10_2006.html