

**Presentation by
Amugune John Agison**

**To International Refugee
Rights Initiative on rights to
nationality and statelessness
of the maragoli community at
Hotel protea in Kampala**

On 2nd/MAY/2018

INTRODUCTION

I take this opportunity to thank International Refugee Rights Initiative (I.R.R.I) for the invitation extended to present my view on the plight of the maragoli community and do believe this will cause further advocacy programs for the community.

My name is Amugune John Agison currently a head teacher in Kiryandongo Local Government and a leader in the Maragoli Community Association formed in 1999 to advocate for the rights of the maragoli community in Uganda. This was as a result of realizing that we were not included in the 3RD schedule of the indigenous tribes of Uganda in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

Historical Background

There are three theories that explain the existence of the maragoli people:-

The first is the migration of the maragoli from Saudi Arabia through Egypt following River Nile to Bunyoro and Busoga then to current western Kenya as recorded from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia were Gideon and Jumba (1967) authors of the "maragoli history and family" <http://www.abeingo.org/HTMLfiles/marahistory.html>. As the maragoli migrated some settled where they found it convenient for farming and rearing of their animals and so was it during this migration that some maragoli settled in the different parts of Uganda though majority settled in Western Kenya.

The second theory is during the construction of the Uganda railway were many maragoli people participated in the work and settled thereafter in Uganda and some came as far as Bunyoro.

The Omukama of Bunyoro Sir Tiito Winyi on hearing the dialect being similar to runyooro with the root word 'ntu' got interested in the community and had to visit the chiefs of the maragoli in Kenya which he requested that some maragoli come and settle in Bunyoro. This resulted in an organized migration in liaison with the then British government, Bunyoro Kingdom and Maragoli chiefs were by the Omukama allocated land in Kigumba and Ntoma settlement schemes in early 1950's. Find attachments for further study.

The challenges faced by the Maragoli community in Uganda are diverse but predominantly these are a few of them;

- ✚ Being a minority tribe and in a state of statelessness there is low self-esteem among members of the community.
- ✚ Being stateless as a result of the introduction of the National Identity cards.
- ✚ Difficulty in accessing government services such as
 - Employment in government and other NGO'S that require nationals of Uganda
 - Getting education scholarships.
 - Registering of learners.
 - Accessing operation wealth creation benefits.
 - Missing out on upgrading opportunities.
 - Medical services in government hospitals.
 - Traveling abroad.
 - Accessing Ugandan passports.
 - Leasing of land among others.

Engagement with Government of Uganda;

I would like to thank the government of Uganda that we have had discussions with through different ministries and bodies and are still hopeful that the matter will be solved and concluded soon.

- ✚ The first government proposal of Naturalization was rejected by the community because the future of naturalization depends on the mercy of parliament on either acquisition and loss of citizenship. This limits the future of the community and given the history we have doesn't befit us, so we settle for citizenship by birth.
- ✚ We successfully petitioned parliament to cause amendment for the maragoli community to be included in the third schedule of the constitution of the republic of Uganda as an indigenous tribe. The community leaders were called to appear before the parliament legal committee and defend our cause of inclusion but unfortunately to date we haven't been included.
- ✚ We petitioned the Attorney General through the speaker of parliament, Ministry of gender and social development to interpret the fate of the maragoli community in Uganda and his interpretation was positive (see interpretation attached) though unfortunately we haven't seen the interpretation and advise being effected.

- ✚ We have also made follow ups with National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) on the implementation of the advice of the Attorney General recommendation made earlier which letters were also copied to the Minister of internal Affairs which has yet not materialized. Instead NIRA insists on naturalization which we very unsuitable for us.
- ✚ We also petitioned Equal Opportunities Commission for the miseries we are going through which commission did their research and organized a tribunal which was conducted and hopefully a positive outcome is expected.

As I conclude, the community's future is in dilemma with this marginalization and discrimination especially at this moment when Identity cards are fully operational.

It's my humble prayer that this opportunity that has been accorded to me in presenting my experience will not go in vain. Thanks for the opportunity.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.

AMUGUNE JOHN AGISON

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