

Beat: Local

ACTIVISTS CONDEMN BIDCO ALLEGATIONS AS RADICALLY MOTIVATED

LABOUR PRACTICES OF BIDCO DEFORESTATION

Paris, Washington DC, 25.08.2016, 20:34 Time

USPA NEWS - The Bidco Truth Coalition (www.No2Bidco.org), an alliance of East African activists exposing bad business ethics of Bidco Africa, strongly condemns Bidco's claim that the coalition's actions amount to extortion.

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No2Bidco.org has never demanded anything from Bidco other than good governance.

Once again, Bidco and its CEO, Vimal Shah, are hiding behind the veneer of a carefully crafted image that deceives the public and the company's partners about Bidco's cruel labour practices, mass deforestation and large-scale tax evasion.

A press release issued by Shah, following a successful protest by No2Bidco.org in London, shows that this veneer is cracking, as No2Bidco.org reveals the truth about the Shah family.

In his accusations, Shah claims that the demonstrators are "bodies for hire" because they could not pronounce his and the company's names correctly. Not only is this attack arrogant and insensitive toward peoples with different dialects, languages and accents, it reveals publicly Shah's reportedly racist tendencies, which permeate Bidco, according to present and former workers.

Remarkably, in his statement Shah does not deny that his company deforested 18,000 acres of pristine land in Kalangala District, on Bugala Island, Uganda. Further confirmation of this travesty is provided by photos posted by Bidco in social media, showing oil palms as far as the eye can see. This is where some of the most lush and beautiful rainforest in the world once stood, before being mowed down so the Shahs could line their pockets with more ill-gotten gains.

No2Bidco.org is not anonymous and faceless. Countless courageous members have spoken out publicly about their treatment by Bidco. Dozens of independent media and NGOs have reported on them "" from The Guardian to Agence France Presse and USAID to Friends of the Earth. From the shores of Bugala Island to the dusty slums of Thika in Kenya, where Bidco workers live, members of our coalition have names and faces, and they live in fear of Shah's henchmen coming to silence them.

The situation in Kalangala District is far from the ideal Bidco presents in its statement. While Bidco takes credit for building wide roads to accommodate the company's fume-spewing trucks, a report called "Pro-Poor Land Records, Palm Oil and Prosperity: Any Proof from Bugala Island, Uganda?"^[1], presented at the Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty on 23 March 2015, found that "a hospital or dedicated public medical facility is still lacking on the island, alcoholism and HIV/AIDS have been on the rise and require intervention, and environmental risks concerning the chemical fertilizer required for the palms are expected to reduce the fish stock in the medium term."^[2]

Meantime, Kalangala's outgrower farmers have protested Bidco's low payments for their crops. In March, the farmers resorted to processing their own oil when Bidco's prices failed to meet international standards stipulated in their contracts. More than a dozen farming families are suing Bidco in Uganda after the company grabbed their land.

The only positive words Kalangala's farmers have for Bidco can be found in a 2015 propaganda video produced by Bidco management. The farmers later said they spoke under duress.

With the facts clearly on the side of No2Bidco.org, Shah has resorted to calling in his Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) puppet Carole Kariuki to defend him. No2Bidco.org sent Kariuki several court decisions that prove Bidco's labour violations, as well as more than 500 pages of documents which implicate Bidco in a Sh5.7 billion (\$57 million) tax evasion, but she lamely states that No2Bidco.org "has refused to come forward to prove their claims."^[3] What many in Kenya know is now proven publicly by Kariuki

herself: she and Shah have turned the organisation into a lobby for Bidco's interests, and KEPSA is party to Bidco's crimes.-----

The website www.No2Bidco.org is a reference tool for all information that the Shah family has tried to hide for years. The articles and documents are from independent sources that have much more credibility than Bidco's empty pronouncements. We urge the public and Bidco's partners to study the information and come to their own conclusion about Bidco Africa. Some of the greatest changes in companies and society have come through activism, and this inspires us.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-8970/activists-condemn-bidco-allegations-as-radically-motivated.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSiV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Rahma Sophia RACHDI

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619