

Statement by the Barotse National Freedom Alliance (BNFA) on the Recent Developments in Barotseland

22nd August, 2013

1. Introduction

The recent developments in Barotseland cannot go without comment. Last week it was reported that one, Afumba Mombotwa was inaugurated as the Administrator-General of Barotseland by a nameless Chief Justice in a secret ceremony. We of the Barotse National Freedom Alliance (BNFA) dissociate ourselves from the work of Mombotwa and his Linyungandambo. We do so with the firm belief that the freedom and independence of Barotseland have to be managed in a coordinated, peaceful and legal manner.

2. Mission and Objective of BNFA

The BNFA is intended to be an umbrella organization of all activist groups, among which are Linyungandambo, Barotse Freedom Movement, Movement for the Restoration of Barotseland, Barotse Patriotic Front, and Barotse Youth League and is also ready to take on board persons of similar persuasion in its resolve to implement the sovereign resolutions of the March 2012 Barotse National Council (BNC). The formation of the BNFA arose out of several liaison efforts among these groupings spanning the year 2012, an activity in which Linyungandambo played a key role by holding the position of Chairperson of the Liaison Committee up to the time that resolutions leading to the establishment of the BNFA were passed. However, membership to BNFA by these organizations remains voluntary and it is noted that Linyungandambo, despite being represented on the Interim Executive Committee of BNFA by three members who it had nominated to the Liaison Committee, has made a decision not to partake in the coordinating oversight of the BNFA over the activities of the member organizations.

While the Barotse National Council (BNC) resolutions mandated the Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE) to re-establish administrative structures that were abolished following the abrogation of the Barotseland Agreement 1964 by the Kaunda regime in 1969, the BNFA holds the view that this action should be preceded by a people-driven legal and political process that is anchored on Barotseland's inalienable rights to statehood, and further that action in this regard should be guided by tenets of international law applicable to the situation.

The BNFA believes that there is adequate capacity at the global, continental and regional levels of society to resolve the issue of Barotseland with minimum cost in the form of human suffering in Barotseland. To this end, we take issue with tactics that tend to encourage our people to turn themselves into human

fodder for the Zambian government and its law enforcement agents who are eager to take advantage of any situation that projects the people of Barotseland as the villain and not the victim in the struggle to undo the injustice brought about by Zambia's illegal exercise of power within Barotseland in the light of termination of the treaty that legitimized Barotseland's incorporation into the Republic of Zambia. It should be noted that the Zambian authorities are aware of the potency of the steps that were taken by the Ngambela of Barotseland soon after the 27 March 2012 Barotse National Council to take the matter of Barotseland to international arbitration, which process is now being pursued under the auspices of the BNFA. To this end, we see efforts being made by Zambian state agents to sow seeds of confusion in Barotseland as a way of promoting an environment that curtails the execution of our struggle by legitimate means. We are aware that the Barotse Royal Establishment has been brought under extreme pressure by the Zambian government in an attempt to dissuade the Barotse Authority from pursuing the people's resolve in respect of the March 2012 Resolutions. We are, however, confident that the need to do the right thing and achieve justice for our people will triumph over these machinations.

3. Need to Guide and Protect the People

While the BNFA has no wish to discourage other Barotse patriots who are not in agreement with its methodology of implementing the March 2012 BNC Resolutions from pursuing the matter in their own ways, we nevertheless call upon the leaders of such groups to take due responsibility for their actions by being ready to face the resultant consequences. The latest action by Linyungandambo, if taken to be an act of civil disobedience, would have been more honourable if its perpetrators were as prepared to meet the law enforcement agents in the same manner that their grass-root supporters, who have been caught up in the dragnet, easily gave themselves up for arrest.

4. The Future State of Barotseland

The BNFA would like to state its unflinching commitment to the struggle for an independent, secular, constitutional monarchy in Barotseland. We are committed to attain this goal by peaceful realization of the March 2012 resolutions. The BNC resolutions were the product of the people of Barotseland in their diversity and drawn from all parts of the Kingdom. The deliberations were convened in broad daylight and were attended by representatives of the Zambian state. At that meeting, the intentions of the people of Barotseland to break away from Zambia and return to the status obtaining before the signing of the Barotseland Agreement 1964 was made before the national and international media and the world. The BNFA wishes to reiterate that the BNC declaration is irrevocable, as it was the expression of the inalienable right of the people of Barotseland. This decision was arrived at after forty-eight (48) years of fruitless efforts to encourage the Zambian government to see sense

and evolve an internal and national solution to the impasse created by its own illegitimate action of terminating the independence unity treaty.

5. Legality and Legitimacy of Barotse Associations

The BNFA also takes the view that the existence of the associations pursuing the matter of Barotseland is a matter of right, even under the constitution of Zambia. Peoples' political and civil rights in determining their destiny are enshrined in a number of international conventions to which Zambia is a signatory. The issue of the Barotseland Agreement 1964 is one of self determination as espoused by international law.

We are also alive to the fact that President Michael Sata had, prior to his election in 2011, declared that he would, within ninety days of his election to President, restore the Barotseland Agreement. After his election, he appointed a Commission of Inquiry on Barotseland chaired by eminent constitutional and human rights lawyer Dr Roger Chongwe. However, he has since refused to honour any of the recommendations by that Commission. We are also aware that prior to his election, President Sata had declared himself a member of Linyungandambo, the organization his government today claims to be illegal. As a matter of fact, President Sata had allocated a slot on the Roger Chongwe Commission to Linyungandambo and the Barotseland Freedom Movement (BFM). The two organizations responded by nominating Mr. Nyambe Namushi, leader of BFM and, currently, Deputy Chairperson-General (Political Mobilization) on the BNFA Executive to sit on that Commission. This action on the part of the President was a further gesture of recognition of the two organizations born out of the realization that the people of Barotseland cannot be stopped from pursuing their birthright of autonomy by cosmetic administrative arrangements, in such form as the office of Registrar of Societies, if the net result is to rob the people of their humanity.

We reiterate that the right to exist and associate is not only constitutional but God given and legislation passed in this respect is only intended to provide formalities for according government an opportunity to maintain a tab on citizens' activities and not to curtail their right to associate and communicate ideas.

6. Acts of Repression Amidst Peoples' Resolve

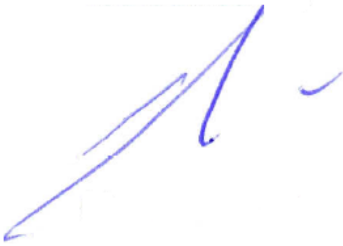
The BNFA is aware of the many atrocities that have been committed against the people of Barotseland since the termination of the Barotseland Agreement 1964. We are close to the people and know that no amount of intimidation, propaganda or infiltration will change the fact that the people of Barotseland desire to be free from the shackles of bondage by the occupying Zambian government. We will fight for our nationhood, robbed us by the dishonesty of

Kenneth David Kaunda and his dictatorial regime. Let it be known that as resolved at the BNC convention of March 2012, the people of Barotseland are no longer interested in re-negotiating the Barotseland Agreement of 1964. Neither do we want limited regional autonomy. We now demand complete self-government and independence. This demand is not unattainable. It is perfectly justifiable in international law. The world is full of examples, such as Eritrea, South Sudan, East Timor, Kosovo, to mention but a few, that have attained independence after sustained struggles, guided by international law.

7. Conclusion

The BNFA wishes to restate its unequivocal position on the right of Barotseland to self-determination. We have the history and the law on our side and we are determined to prosecute the struggle for the freedom of our land in a peaceful manner until we realize our goal. We are buttressed in our resolve by the articles of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986). In denying the people of Barotseland their right to determine their destiny, Zambia is in breach of international humanitarian law. In engaging in acts of repression, torture, arrests and detentions of activists and ordinary Barotse people, the Zambian state is in violation of people's human rights.

Barotseland will be free!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Clement Wainyae Sinyinda', written in a cursive style.

Clement Wainyae Sinyinda
Chairman General