

On Dar destructive floods and Dr Bohela Lunogelo's teaser

I have noted rather disturbing silence from the media on what should have been the right approach in dealing with people who have endlessly ignored government directives prohibiting settlements in waterway valleys of Dar es Salaam. Do you think it is right for the government to reward law breakers? In my view the only segment of people who deserved compensation are tenants.

They were wooed by errant landlords to pay rent on illegally erected structures. Or have you already discussed that in one of your editions? I recall that one of the three pillars of Vision 2025 is creating a society based on rule of law and law abiding citizens. Waswahili (Swahili people) have a saying "sheria ni msumeno" (law must be obeyed) once enacted. My worry is that we are creating a dangerous precedent of rewarding law breaking citizens.

Don't be surprised that one day an

NGO will come with a call or campaign to release all petty thieves and vibaka (thugs) because after all it is not their fault to engage in such petty crime since the society, through their elected government, has failed to create enough jobs for their lawful employment.

I thought I should tease you with this provocative question for a change. Once the law is enacted, no one is allowed to break it and later on claim either ignorance or question "where was the government or law enforcers when I was violating the law." Unfortunately that is where we are right now.

The government is being taken to task for its failure to take to task law breakers. I once heard this hilarious joke about a thief who, when given a chance to defend oneself, wondered why the owner of the house was so reckless he went to bed without properly locking doors to his sitting room.

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"He must have done so purposely to allow me to easily steal his things so that I am taken to court." "Ndugu Hakimu huyu jamaa ana kisa na sisi watu maskini ambao hatujui kesho tutakula nini!" (Brother Magistrate, this guy wants to provoke us and we poor people can't be sure what we shall eat tomorrow).

And so he ended his submission. The question here is: does the failure of government to provide low cost plots or low cost housing schemes justify those with money to invade and build houses in prohibited dangerous areas with impunity?

And when disaster catches up with their tenants, does the same government turn around and reward the landlords with compensation rather than the tenants who were misled to rent in those illegal structures?

We are not quite sure of the social and economic status of those valley landlords in Dar es Salaam. However,

it is an open secret that middle and upper income class with the right political connections are the ones with high stakes in urban slums of Kenya, South Africa and India. In my view President Jakaya Kikwete was more than right to intervene and direct that Dar es Salaam city authorities also to consider the plight of tenants.

He, however, fell short of reprimanding the landlords, perhaps because he believes the majority of those illegally built houses belonged to low income citizens or as they say "walala hoi" (the downtrodden) who were so politically connected that despite several orders to vacate and stop building they had the guts to ignore those orders with impunity until when the 2011 floods came and demolished or rendered them useless on behalf of the government.

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