



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 18, 2024

**PRESS STATEMENT: COMMUNITY DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST OIL
EXPLOITATION IN TESO SUB REGION**

Today, the communities of Teso Sub Region, led by their area Members of Parliament, Hon. Jonathan Ebwau of Soroti City West, and Hon. Joan Aloba of Soroti City in Soroti municipality, conducted peaceful demonstrations in response to the ongoing meetings by Ministry of Energy officials on the proposed oil and gas exploration activities in their area. These demonstrations were organized in direct response to the government's announcement of prospecting discoveries and were intended to raise awareness about the potential impacts on the region's socio-economic and environmental fabric, as well as the concerns related to land appropriation

Teso region have long endured the effects of decades-long conflicts and economic challenges, making them acutely aware of the delicate balance with the compulsory land acquisition. The recent engagement by the government with local leaders has raised concerns among the community, who fear the exploitation of their ignorance and desperation on land matters

The communities in Teso region have strongly denounced any attempt to exploit their vulnerability for short-term gains when science is clear no new oil and gas exploration can bring any benefit to the front line communities and as EGI we stand united in our commitment to protect the rights and interests of the people of Teso Sub Region.

It is also disheartening to witness that the planned exploration of oil and gas in the region would derail the ongoing efforts to harness the abundant solar energy resources in Teso region. This regions hold significant promise for renewable energy initiatives, and we strongly advocate for sustainable and eco-friendly alternatives to be prioritized as a development path.

The peaceful demonstrations, which began with a united expression of community voices, unfortunately encountered an unwarranted and excessive response from the authorities. Tear gas and live bullets were employed against the demonstrators, a disproportionate use of force that undermines the democratic right to peaceful assembly.

We call on the government to:

1. Respect the democratic right to peaceful assembly and ensure the safety of all protesters.

2. Engage in open and transparent dialogue with the affected communities, considering their concerns and aspirations.
3. Prioritize sustainable and environmentally friendly development initiatives, such as solar energy
4. Prioritize a transparent and consultative approach and allow communities to choose the energy they want especially that the region is blessed with enormous potential for solar energy

We urge the government to act responsibly and collaboratively to address the concerns raised by the community.

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