

**Survival**



The global movement  
for tribal peoples' rights

The dark secrets of the Bronx Zoo's Wildlife Conservation Society

# Now there is just sadness

**Bayaka** Republic of Congo

WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY

BRONX ZOO

**WHY IS  
BRONX ZOO  
FUNDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
ABUSE?**

# 1 Now there is just sadness

## Introduction

**When the history of the Zoological Park is written, this incident will form its most amusing passage.**

The Director of the Bronx Zoo, on the exhibit of a Congolese "Pygmy" in the Ape House<sup>1</sup>

**The wildlife guards beat us like animals. We want what they're doing to end.**

Bayaka "Pygmy" woman, Congo, Sept. 4, 2016

Each year over two million people visit New York's Bronx Zoo. Many of them stop at the Congo Gorilla Forest exhibit, the largest replica of an African rainforest on the planet. Over 6000 miles away, real Congolese forests are being emptied of their original inhabitants through violence and intimidation. Yet, for the zoo's visitors, the fact that their admission fees are contributing to these atrocities is kept far from their minds.

This report investigates how the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which runs the zoo, is contributing to gross human rights abuses in two project sites in the Congo Basin. Similar abuses are reported in other WCS sites in the region and elsewhere in the world.<sup>2</sup>

In these two sites, WCS funds national parks that have been imposed on the ancestral homelands of Bayaka and Batwa "Pygmies"<sup>3</sup> without their consent, from which they are being illegally evicted.<sup>4</sup> The Bayaka and Batwa are accused of "poaching" when they hunt to feed their families, both inside and outside these parks. They face harassment and beatings, torture and even death at the hands of anti-poaching squads funded and equipped by WCS.

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To understand how a conservation non-profit could support a system that scapegoats and abuses the very people who have managed their environments for countless generations, it helps to take a look at WCS's beginnings. New York City needed a zoo, Theodore Roosevelt felt, and he appointed his fellow big-game hunter Madison Grant to champion the cause. In 1895, Grant helped found WCS, or the New York Zoological Society as it was first known. Some four years after that, the Bronx Zoo opened its gates.

Grant, who helped manage WCS for over 40 years, is remembered as a founder of the modern conservation movement. He was also a fervent eugenicist and wrote the notorious screed *The Passing of the Great Race*, which called for the cleansing of America of "inferior races" – views shared by other senior WCS staff at the time. Adolf Hitler described the work as "my Bible," and Roosevelt as "a capital book."<sup>5</sup> Once Roosevelt reached the White House he pursued his passion for conservation, with the help of Grant and other WCS eugenicists. The fact that this often entailed taking indigenous land did little to stop them. As Grant remarked: "No one who knew the true nature of the Indian felt any regret that they were driven off their hunting grounds."<sup>6</sup>

Conservationists showed the same contempt for indigenous peoples in Africa. In 1906, with the support of Grant and WCS, a "Pygmy" man known as Ota Benga, from Belgium's colony in the Congo Basin, was brought to the zoo. First he was kept in the Ape House, which was strewn with bones to evoke cannibalism. Later he was chased through the zoo, as visitors poked

## 2 Now there is just sadness

**The little African savage [...] has one of the best rooms in the primate house.**

Bronx zookeeper, September, 1906<sup>7</sup>

**The intelligence and ability of a colored person are in pretty direct proportion to the amount of white blood he has.**

Madison Grant, founder of WCS, 1933<sup>8</sup>

him in the ribs and tripped him up. In time he was released but, just 10 years later, he ended up taking his own life.<sup>9</sup>

“You have to look at the time in which it happened,” WCS has since claimed in its defence, “and you try to understand why this would occur.”<sup>10</sup> Yet even at the time many New Yorkers – let alone Ota Benga – saw how unjust it was to treat a human being this way. Rather than judging its racist past against the supposed spirit of the times, WCS should be scrutinizing what kinds of injustice it is contributing to today but dismisses as normal.

WCS claims that it no longer calls for the eviction of indigenous peoples: “The way we memorialize the Ota Benga experience is by making sure that the place where Ota Benga came from remains a place where his people can continue to live.”<sup>11</sup> No one knows for sure where exactly Ota Benga came from but, across the Congo Basin, WCS is in fact doing the opposite: funding violent conservation projects that indigenous people have not consented to and which are driving them from their forests. WCS may no longer share Grant’s extreme racist views, but it still supports projects abroad that would never be tolerated on US soil today.

There are other signs that WCS has not properly shaken off its legacy. Earlier this year, it gave its “Theodore Roosevelt Award for Conservation Leadership” award to Ali Bongo, the president of Gabon, who has been referred to the International Criminal Court for alleged crimes against humanity. One of WCS’s senior conservationists was even clearer in a speech he made to the US Congress: “I believe that Teddy Roosevelt had it right. [...] My work in the Congo Basin has been basically to try to bring this US model to Africa.”<sup>12</sup> The fact that this model brought such suffering to indigenous Americans appears to have held no more relevance than it did for Roosevelt, a man who once claimed that “the most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian.”<sup>13</sup>

“Green colonialism” is therefore alive and well in the Congo Basin, as the US government continues to provide much of the funding for WCS’s work. It is true that, on paper, WCS has recognized indigenous peoples’ right to refuse any project affecting their lands. Yet, in practice, it appears to believe that it can uphold or ignore their human rights as it wishes.

Why will WCS not make the effort to listen to the Bayaka and Batwa and secure their consent, before more lives are ruined or lost? That would be in line with basic standards of corporate social responsibility. Instead WCS continues to show them much the same disregard – for their dignity, their livelihoods and their basic safety – that it showed Ota Benga at the Bronx Zoo so many years ago.



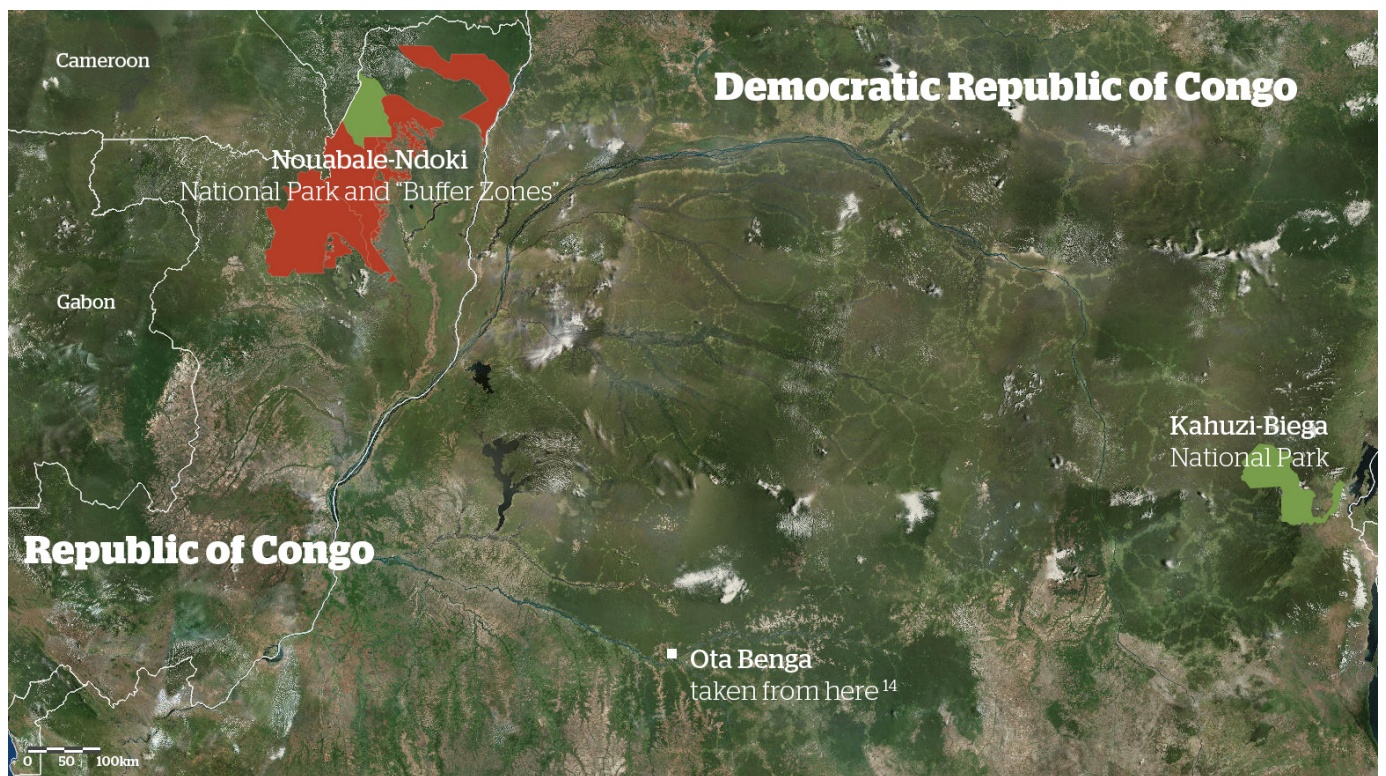
# Ota Benga

Displayed in the Ape House of the Bronx Zoo, 1906



## 4 Now there is just sadness

### Two WCS project sites in the Congo Basin




■ National parks

■ Forests logged by WCS's partners

Source: Global Forest Watch





**WHY IS  
BRONX ZOO  
FUNDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
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## Northeast Congo

### WCS partners with loggers, Bayaka dispossessed

Michael Fay, one of the Wildlife Conservation Society's (WCS) senior conservationists, told the US Congress in 2003: "I believe that Teddy Roosevelt had it right. [...] My work in the Congo Basin has been basically to try to bring this US model to Africa."<sup>15</sup>

Yet the model of national parks he sought to export inflicted hardship and violence on indigenous Native Americans, and involved the theft of their ancestral homelands through forced expulsions. It has also failed to protect a significant part of the wildlife in the USA.

Ten years earlier, Fay and his team had succeeded in convincing the Congolese government to create the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, which WCS manages today. At a stroke, the Bayaka were robbed of a large swathe of their ancestral forests. "They're a gracious people," Fay would later remark, "too kind to put up a fight for their rights."<sup>16</sup>

WCS then partnered with two logging companies in order to secure the park's "buffer zones." Together with the Congolese government, they organized anti-poaching patrols inside the logging concessions. This was despite the fact that studies show that increased logging boosts the incidence of poaching by carving new trafficking routes deep into the forest, which corrupt officials and military elites then exploit for the illegal wildlife trade. WCS may say that this logging is sustainable, but the evidence does not support them.<sup>17</sup>

Across the region Bayaka and Baka "Pygmies" have been victims of intimidation and abuse by wildlife guards supported by WCS and these logging companies – even a handicapped man and children have been assaulted. Although WCS has been aware of this persecution since at least 2005, it has yet to take effective action. In 2013, twenty years after the Bayaka's land was carved up for the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park, WCS helped to create a new park, this time on the ancestral homelands of Luma "Pygmies" and their Bongili neighbors, again without their consent. A recent investigation found that this park was created unlawfully and that it will "deprive local communities and indigenous populations of their only means of subsistence." It predicts that, if the draconian wildlife laws are fully enforced, the local population will "be forced to migrate in order to survive or find themselves in a guerrilla war against the wildlife guards."<sup>18</sup>



# Bronx Zoo

Why is Bronx Zoo funding HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE?



DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION



**When we traveled up the upper Mokola River [sic] we found camp after camp after camp. These camps have mostly been abandoned because park authorities from Nouabalé-Ndoki have made sweeps.**

Michael Fay, WCS, 1999<sup>19</sup>

**We get so much suffering because of wildlife guards. We can't go and find things in the forest as we used to. All we hear is hunger.**

Bayaka man, Mboua, 2004<sup>20</sup>

**Dec. 31, 1993** Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park is created on the Bayaka's land without their free, prior and informed consent, with the support of WCS and the U.S. government. The Bayaka are not allowed to enter the park.

**May 1998** A study finds that groups of Bayaka in the Central African Republic regard certain forests across the border in Congo "as the heart of their hunting territory [...]. With the creation of the Nouabalé-Ndoki Park, this area too has been forbidden to them."<sup>21</sup>

**May 6, 1999** A news report recounts how Bayaka describe being targeted by wildlife rangers that mistreat and temporarily imprison them, and how this has led to more frequent malnutrition among children and vulnerable adults.

A Congolese researcher remarks that: "While people are suffering from hunger in the heart of the forest, [wild] meat is being offered daily in restaurants" in local towns.

*We have the impression that those who support wildlife protection have decided to kill us.*

Edmond Monzoubé, Bayaka man, Indongo<sup>22</sup>

**1999** WCS signs an agreement with the logging company Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) and the Congolese government to organize anti-poaching patrols.

**We are the guardians of the forest. The forest people. But we get nothing from anyone. They took our trees and then they came to forbid us our hunting. So we have to stay in the village. Now we are dying of hunger.**

Bayaka, Mobangui, 2004<sup>23</sup>

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**2004**

A BBC investigation finds that the bushmeat trade in northeast Congo “is organised by members of local elites who ensure that “their” bush meat sellers are not targeted” by wildlife guards. Instead the guards “have been accused of victimising” the Bayaka.<sup>24</sup>

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**Late 2004**  
Mobangui

Wildlife guards beat a Bayaka man and take his meat.<sup>25</sup>

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**2004/2005**

A group of a dozen Bayaka who went to Yandoumbe, Central African Republic, in 1998 wish to return home to Congo. Their party includes one dying man. WCS discovers that they plan to travel through Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park and dispatches a team of wildlife guards to pursue them. The man dies en route in the forest.

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**August 2005**  
Indongo

A Bayaka man from Indongo is beaten by wildlife guards, who break two of his ribs and knock out one or more of his teeth.

WCS investigates this account and notes that the man’s tooth was decayed, so the “slap he received only made it fall out sooner.”<sup>26</sup>

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*His pants having fallen down when the beating started, he remained naked throughout the ordeal [...] Bleeding, he was left on the ground from where he heard the threats of one of the wildlife guards: “You’re just a Pygmy, I can kill you with my gun and nothing will happen.”*

Notes made by L’Observatoire congolais des droits de l’homme (OCDH), October 2 2005<sup>27</sup>

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**My ancestors left  
me this forest.  
It's not for the  
wildlife guards**

**Bayaka** Northeast Republic of Congo





Since the most serious environmental crimes are mostly organized by local political and military elites, wildlife guards are often unable to arrest perpetrators. So [Bayaka] become soft targets in their forest camps for violent visitations by these paramilitary groups.

Dr. Jerome Lewis, University College London, 2014<sup>28</sup>

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**August 2005**

Greenpeace publishes a report on an investigation of a concession leased to the logging company Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB), WCS's partner.

Bayaka they interviewed "claimed that if they were found with meat in the forest they would be beaten and the meat confiscated."

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*Then we met another white man (WCS) who came to tell us to stop hunting and that the wildlife guards would make sure we did. Now we are afraid to go far in the forest in case the wildlife guards catch us.*

Bayaka, Mobanguï, 2004<sup>29</sup>

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**September 2005** Wildlife guards beat a Bayaka man from Indongo. Indongo

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*When [he] could no longer get up, the wildlife guards tied up his arms. They abandoned him in the forest, thrown to the ground.*

Notes made by L'Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme, October 2, 2005<sup>30</sup>

**2007**

WCS signs an agreement with the logging company Industrie Forestière de Ouessou (IFO) and the Congolese government to organize anti-poaching patrols.

**The wildlife guards make us sit here with hunger. They have ruined our world. If we try to hunt in the forest, they beat us so badly. They even kill us if they see us in the forest.**

Bayaka woman, Sangha region, June 2012<sup>31</sup>

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**October 2005**

L'Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme (OCDH) publishes a report on wildlife guard misconduct in north Congo. It includes three accounts of violent abuse against Bayaka.

It warns that some Bayaka “are dying of hunger” and denounces the guards for “instilling a real psychosis of fear” among them.<sup>32</sup>

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**June 2006**

A study by L'Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme (OCDH) and the Rainforest Foundation on the situation of indigenous peoples in Congo finds that they are

*often threatened and ill-treated by state or conservation officials when attempting to exercise their hunter/gatherer traditions. They are frequently thrown off their lands and even ejected from their homes.*<sup>33</sup>

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**Aug. 11, 2006**

A news report relates how

*The “ecoguards” of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) [...] are accused of regularly beating local Mbendjele [Bayaka], for ‘simply being Mbendjele’”<sup>34</sup>*

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**February 2007**

A study on logging finds that the Bayaka “are frequently searched, threatened and even beaten” by wildlife guards.<sup>35</sup>

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**June 5, 2007**

A team of United Nations Special Rapporteurs raise their concern that the treatment the Bayaka are suffering at the hands of wildlife guards “is linked to racist discrimination against them.”<sup>36</sup>

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# Union Square

Why is  
Bronx Zoo  
funding  
**HUMAN RIGHTS  
ABUSE?**

**If we go into the forest we eat well there compared to here. We eat wild yams and honey. We want to go into the forest but they forbid us to. It frightens us. It frightens us.**

Bayaka woman, Ngomba, Sept. 2, 2016

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**September 2008** A report notes that wildlife guards “are often employed to patrol the forest, but their poor training and surveillance can lead to them abusing their position of power.”<sup>37</sup>

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**2008** A UNICEF report explains that the legally recognized right to gather resources is “flouted on the most basic level because indigenous people no longer have access to areas rich in game” due to protected areas in Congo.<sup>38</sup>

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**May 2009** The Human Rights Council at the United Nations hears that Bayaka have been the victims of “brutal searches” and “a general climate of constant or even systematic violence” perpetrated by wildlife guards.<sup>39</sup>

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**2009** Wildlife guards beat a Bayaka man in Pokola.  
Pokola

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**March 2010** A man is shot by a wildlife guard while trying to run away and dies from his injuries on March 9, 2010.<sup>40</sup>  
Ndoki

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**March/April 2012** An elderly and frail Bayaka man is imprisoned after he is accused of hunting an elephant. A team of researchers note that:

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*[He] is probably over 70 years old, is short-sighted and slow on his feet. It is clear that he could not kill an elephant.*<sup>41</sup>

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**The anti-poaching squad told me to move the child that was at my feet. Then they beat my back with pieces of wood and I fell to the ground. With every threat they made, they would beat me again.**

Bayaka woman, Moukouloungou, Aug. 23, 2013

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**Early 2012**

Sangha<sup>42</sup>

A handicapped Bayaka man is harassed and assaulted by wildlife guards.

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*They pushed him with the barrel of their gun. They tried to burn down his house and beat him.*

Bayaka man, Pokola, Aug. 30, 2016

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**March 2012**

Dr. Jerome Lewis, an anthropologist at University College London, reports that, since he first started working with Bayaka in 1994, he has noticed increasingly poor nutrition and increased mortality.

He attributes this to the removal of forest resources by loggers and to “conservationists’ exclusionary and draconian management practices.”<sup>43</sup>

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**Aug./Sept. 2012**

Makoko

A Bayaka camp for gathering *payo* fruit is raided by wildlife guards. The guards beat a Bayaka man, his young son and his two young nephews and steal their possessions.

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*Even if we go only to gather payo fruit, the wildlife guards abuse us and we come back to the village.*

Bayaka man, Ngomba, Aug. 23, 2013

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# **We're afraid. Who can we complain to - the trees?**

Bayaka Northeast Republic of Congo





**I don't want to leave here. It's my home.**

Bayaka man, evicted from Longa in September 2013

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**Feb/March 2013** A Bayaka man and a Bayaka woman are beaten by wildlife guards near the Bondingou. The guards destroy the woman's home and property.  
Bondingou

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*Before binding my hands behind my back with vines they took off my shirt and started beating me with large branches. [...] I heard them say that they'd go to the other camp and on the way back finish me off and throw me in the river.*

Bayaka man, Moukouloungou, Aug. 23, 2013

**March 4, 2013** Ntokou-Pikounda National Park is created on the Luma's and Bongili's land, without their free, prior and informed consent.

**July 2013** An elderly Bayaka man and two other Bayaka men are beaten by wildlife guards.  
Boko

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*I showed them the small antelope but they continued to beat me and two other men, on our heads, chests and legs with belts and large branches.*

Bayaka man, Moukouloungou, Aug. 23, 2013

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**September 2013** The Bayaka community of Longa, in the logging concession leased to Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB), is evicted in the name of conservation.  
Longa

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**They fired gunshots above our heads. They all beat us, with pieces of wood. They wounded my father in the head, and they broke my index finger.**

Bayaka man, Makao, Sept. 1, 2016

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**November 2013** Makao The researcher Dr. Michael Riddell at the University of Oxford estimates that Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park covers at least 580km<sup>2</sup> of forest previously used by the Bayaka and Kaka of Makao.

He finds that conservation and logging have led to poorer health and higher levels of drug and alcohol addiction among the Bayaka.

He argues that conservation efforts would benefit from gaining people's consent, which would likely involve maintaining their access to the forest inside and outside the park.<sup>44</sup>

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**December 2013** A team of researchers working on anti-poaching technology write that:

*Wildlife guards looking for easier targets often visit [Bayaka] and other local communities where they too often resort to violence and abuse.<sup>45</sup>*

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**2013** Ndeme Wildlife guards beat a Bayaka man and burn his camp to the ground.

*When they arrived in the camp they started rummaging through stewpots, burning down houses, burning clothes. My child ran away and disappeared.*

Bayaka man, Moukouloungou, Sept. 1, 2016

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# They beat me, my son and my nephews

Bayaka Northeast Republic of Congo



**I find this a very serious problem and in my opinion most wildlife guards have other motives than protecting the animals to work as a wildlife guard.**

Doctor with extensive experience working in the region, Sept. 7, 2015<sup>46</sup>

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**2013**  
Batanga

A Bayaka man is beaten by wildlife guards in Batanga.

*I was looking for honey. [...] They beat me with a switch and slapped me too.*

Bayaka man, Moukouloungou, Sept. 1, 2016

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**2013**

A team of researchers explain how the system of wildlife guards “in particular is the source of many abuses: [Bayaka] hunters reported being repeatedly harassed and beaten up by them for possession of ‘permitted bush-meat.’”

They report on the desperate conditions faced by Bayaka pressured to leave the forest for a logging town, as a result of this abuse.<sup>47</sup>

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**2013**  
Mboule (CAR)

Congolese wildlife guards arrive at a forest camp in the Central African Republic, and steal legally caught fish from Bayaka.

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**2013/2014**  
Bondingou

At least six Bayaka are beaten by wildlife guards in Bondingou.

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**Aug-Oct 2014**  
Sesenge

During the rainy season, wildlife guards beat four Bayaka men in a forest camp near Nouabale-Ndoki National Park. The guards break one of the men’s index finger.

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**If wildlife guards see bones on the ground outside, it's a problem. If someone doesn't explain something well, they start beating, beating, beating.**

Bayaka man, Pokola, Aug. 30, 2016

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**November 2014** The International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) publishes a report on conservation in the Congo-CAR-Cameroon border region. It finds that

*in all three countries [Cameroon, CAR, Congo], large areas customarily used by Pygmy communities have been included in national parks, where all access is prohibited.*

*Human rights abuses against local people perpetrated by wildlife guards are common.*<sup>48</sup>

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**2014** An inspection of one of CIB's logging concessions hears that the Bayaka's "hunting way of life has become criminalised by the excessive targeting of these communities" by wildlife guards, while "the greatest environmental criminals continue to operate with seeming impunity."<sup>49</sup>

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**Early 2015** Wildlife guards threaten a Bayaka woman, destroy her basket and throw the fish she has caught on the ground.  
Mokoto

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**May 2015** A doctor who started work in northeast Congo in 2012 reports that

*Aside from wounds inflicted by gorillas, buffalo or other wild animals, my colleague and I also see [gun] wounds in people claiming to have been attacked - sometimes without warning - by the protectors of wildlife: the wildlife guards.*<sup>50</sup>

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**June 2015** Wildlife guards beat a Bayaka man searching for medicines in Male and steal his machete.  
Male

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# They struck me five times, then I passed out

Bayaka Northeast Republic of Congo





**Our spirits are in the forest.  
We're the ones who conserve  
the forest.**

Bayaka man, Moukouloungou, Sept. 2, 2016

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**Aug.-Oct. 2015** A Bayaka man is beaten by wildlife guards on the logging road between Bosani and Mangombe.  
Sombo

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**Aug.-Oct. 2015** Wildlife guards burn down a Bayaka forest camp in Mokoto.  
Mokoto

*I'd found some honey. When I came back to the camp I found that my house had already been destroyed.*

Bayaka man, Komba Komba, September 2, 2016

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**November 2015** A study on logging in the region finds that

*Clearly, the policy of employing wildlife guards undermines the traditional role of indigenous people; delegitimizing their role as guardian of the wildlife. Moreover, indigenous people see eco-guards as unreasonably targeting them and their reliance on bush meat.<sup>51</sup>*

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**December 2015** A wildlife guard opens fire on a man in Kabo, near Kabo, near Nouabale-Ndoki National Park, injuring him.<sup>52</sup>

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**2015** The Baka camp of Ngwandji is evicted by wildlife guards, in the logging concession leased to Industrie Forestière de Ouesso (IFO), one of WCS's partners.  
Ngwandji

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**2015/2016** Bayaka are beaten by wildlife guards in a forest camp in Sisi. Their belongings are destroyed and their houses burned to the ground.  
Sisi

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**We ask all those who give money to the Nouabalé-Ndoki park and to the wildlife guards to come here, listen to our problems and seek our consent. Otherwise how are we supposed to eat?**

Bayaka, Makao, Sept. 3, 2016

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**Early 2016** Wildlife guards beat a Bayaka man from Mbandza.  
Mbandza

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**Early 2016** Wildlife guards tell Bayaka from Mobangui that if  
Mobangui they stay in the forest their houses will be burned  
down and they will be beaten.

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**May 2016** Five men are beaten by wildlife guards in Mbandza.  
Mbandza One of the men is hospitalized.

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**June 2016** Wildlife guards tell a Bayaka woman to leave the  
Mokoto forest.

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*The wildlife guards came to chase me away. They rummaged in my basket and then destroyed it with their machetes. There was nothing but wild greens in it. They said: "You mustn't stay here. You have to stay in the village."*

Bayaka woman, Komba Komba, Sept. 2, 2016

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**June/July 2016** Wildlife guards evict Baka from their camp at Inyele,  
Inyele in the logging concession leased to the logging  
company IFO, which WCS has partnered with.

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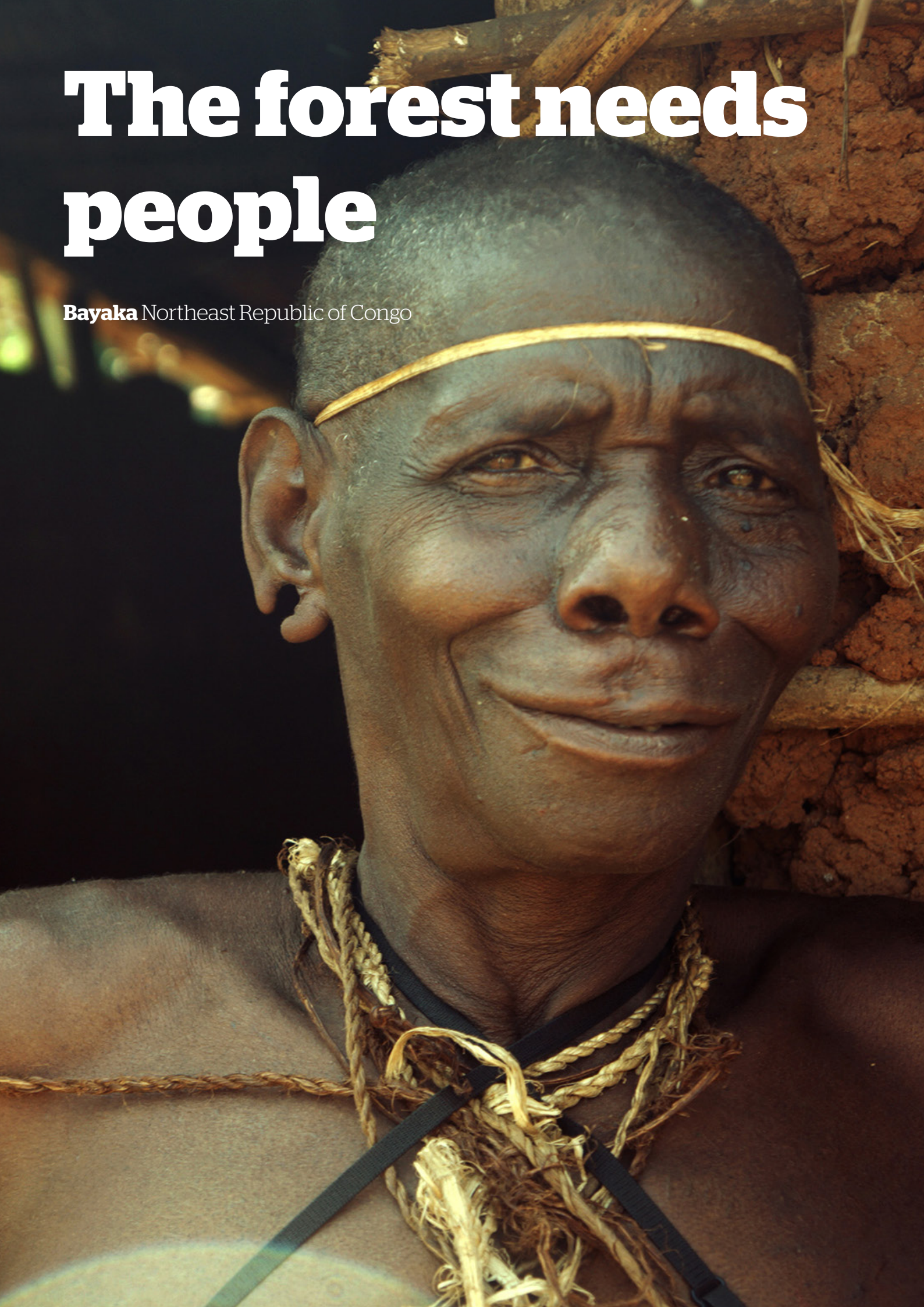
**June/July 2016** The same wildlife guards go on to beat and arrest  
Ngwandji one Baka man in a camp in Ngwandji.

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# The forest needs people

**Bayaka** Northeast Republic of Congo



**Children are dying of hunger.**

Bayaka man, Pokola, Sept. 23, 2017

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<b>July 2016</b> Kambaolo	A Bayaka man is beaten by wildlife guards in a fishing camp in Kambaolo.
	<hr/> <i>If you go into the park they will get you and take you to prison. Even not in the park they say: "We're going to kill you. Get out, get out, get out."</i> Bayaka man, Makao, Sept. 1, 2016
<b>Aug. 16, 2016</b> Ndongo	Wildlife guards force a Bayaka man to carry their baggage for roughly 10 kilometers.
<b>Aug. 30, 2016</b> Bwanga	Wildlife guards steal meat, a stewpot and an axe from a Bayaka camp in Bwanga.
<b>Aug. 31, 2016</b> PK12	A Bayaka home is burned down by wildlife guards in PK12.
<b>Oct./Nov. 2016</b> Pokola	A Bayaka man is beaten by wildlife guards.
<b>December 2016</b> Pikounda	An investigation finds that Ntokou-Pikounda park was created unlawfully and without the consent of the Luma "Pygmies" and their neighbors the Bongili. The Luma and Bongili tell the investigators that they are afraid of being subjected to wildlife guard violence, like the people living by the nearby Nouabalé-Ndoki and Odzala-Kokoua National Parks. <sup>53</sup>

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**The wildlife guards abuse us. They don't want us to go into the forest. How can we feed our children?**

Bayaka man from Mbandza, Pokola area,  
Aug. 27, 2016

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**December 2016** A paper by Dr. Jerome Lewis, an anthropologist at University College London, describes how wildlife guards “are often unable to arrest perpetrators due to their political connections” and that the Bayaka and local villagers “become soft-tarets for violent visitations.”<sup>54</sup>

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**February 2017** Wildlife guards come across a Baka forest camp in Ngwandji, in the logging concession leased to the logging company and WCS partner IFO, and destroy it.

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**Sept. 18, 2017** A report is published concerning an epidemic that struck Mbandza and four neighboring villages, leaving at least 57 mostly Bayaka children dead.

The report notes that conservation may have played a role in the deaths of the children, as their immunity would have been compromised by the loss of their forest resources.<sup>55</sup>

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**Oct. 16, 2017** A report by L'Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme (OCDH) relates how “several people have testified about abuse by wildlife guards” and describes the case of one man who was beaten by guards in 2016.<sup>56</sup>

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## East Democratic Republic of Congo

### Killing for Conservation

In the fall of 1919, King Albert of Belgium accompanied the director of the New York Zoological Society on a visit to the Yosemite Valley, where they marvelled at what they saw. The land before them, however, was no “wilderness” but rather the scene of a violent eviction of indigenous Ahwaneechee, who had long managed the valley’s forests and meadows.<sup>57</sup> Their valley had become part of the Yosemite National Park by order of Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 – just a few months before the New York Zoological Society locked Ota Benga in the Ape House at the Bronx Zoo.

King Albert’s idea was to create something similar in the colony he ruled over in the Congo Basin, where Ota Benga hailed from. He was supported in his plans by some of the same eugenicist grandees of the New York Zoological Society who had been involved in the shocking exhibition at the Ape House. These plans reached fruition with the creation of the Albert National Park – today’s Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo – in 1925. The park’s indigenous landowners were evicted and today are still denied access and abused by wildlife guards.<sup>58</sup>

In 1970, an expanse of mountain rainforest to the south was declared another national park, following the lobbying of Belgian colonist Adrien Deschryver. In the space of a decade, hundreds of Batwa “Pygmy” families were evicted from their lands inside the new Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Over the past two decades, WCS – as the New York Zoological Society is now known – has become one of the park’s most important backers. It has trained, funded and equipped wildlife guards, rehabilitated patrol posts, helped mark out park boundaries and assisted with many other aspects of park management.

Meanwhile, the Batwa continue their fight for justice. One man, Nakulire Munganga, was a young child when his family was evicted from the park. He joined other Batwa in filing complaints against the Congolese government before the country’s Supreme Court and the African Commission, the continent’s top human rights watchdog. These explained how the evictions were illegal and had consigned the Batwa to lives of poverty, landlessness and plummeting health.

To this day no judgment has been passed but, for the Batwa, justice delayed is justice denied. On August 26, 2017, Nakulire entered the park with his son, Christian Mbone, to gather medicinal herbs. There they encountered a team of wildlife guards, who opened fire. Nakulire managed to escape, wounded, while his son – just 17 years old – died at the scene. Nakulire has written to WCS, urging it to take action, but to this day his appeal has received no response.



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**WHY IS  
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ABUSE?**





**We did not know they were coming. It was early in the morning. I heard people around my house. I looked through the door and saw people in uniforms with guns. Then suddenly one of them forced the door of our house and started shouting that we had to leave immediately because the park is not our land. I first did not understand what he was talking about because all my ancestors have lived on these lands. They were so violent that I left with my children.**

Twa widow<sup>59</sup>

**Nov. 30, 1970** The Kahuzi-Biega National Park is created on the Batwa's ancestral land without their consent. The decision is made following the lobbying efforts of the Belgian conservationist Adrien Deschryver.

**1975** The eviction of 580 Batwa families (as many as 6000 individuals) that began in the late 1960s is now largely complete. Some evictions are thought to continue into the 1980s.<sup>60</sup>

**August 1995** Four Batwa are accused of killing a gorilla inside the park. They are imprisoned for eleven months without trial and subjected to torture in detention.

Their defense lawyer, Dr Albert K. Barume, reports being told by the park authorities that the four Batwa should be severely punished so as to deter other Batwa from hunting in the park.

The men are ultimately released due to lack of evidence, but one of the men dies from a wound he reportedly sustained due to ill-treatment in prison.

*The sight was horrific, resembling a concentration camp. [...] The author took his four Twa clients outside but they appeared to have lost their power of speech. A green substance was growing on their skin. [One man recovered his speech after a few days and] recounted that they had been severely tortured to make them confess, and that they were unable to get food.*

Dr Albert K. Barume on meeting his clients for the first time<sup>61</sup>

**Twa allegedly caught breaching the Park's regulations are frequently subjected to brutal and inhuman treatment in order to deter them from entering the Park.**

Dr. Albert K. Barume, 2000<sup>62</sup>

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**Oct. 1995 – Feb. 1996** A survey of 37 Batwa communities around Kahuzi-Biega finds that malnutrition and mortality have increased since the Batwa were evicted.

“We met several people who claimed not to have eaten any meat, fish or other food rich in protein for more than a year.”<sup>63</sup>

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**Aug. 6, 1996** Survival writes to the German development agency GTZ, explaining its concerns at how indigenous peoples' land had been stolen to create Kahuzi-Biega.

It cautions that “There have already been acts of violence, and the situation can only deteriorate unless some remedy is found.”

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**2000** An investigation is published into the situation of the Batwa evicted from Kahuzi-Biega.

The study finds that the Batwa are suffering from nutritional deficiencies, because they are no longer able to hunt in the forest, and soaring mortality rates. Malnutrition is particularly pronounced among women and children.

.....

*When the Twa man looked after his health by using his traditional knowledge and his familiarity with the plants, his health was much better. He used to live longer.*

Batwa man, Cifunzi<sup>64</sup>

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Cher Dr Samper,

Parks need peoples

Violations des droits de l'homme : plainte depuis le Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RDC

Je m'appelle Mobutu Nakulire Munganga. Je suis un autochtone pygmée mutwa de Buyungule, un village au bord du Parc national de Kahuzi-Biega.

Le parc est notre territoire ancestral. Nos ancêtres y avaient toujours bien vécu aux côtés des animaux de la forêt, mais nous en avons été violemment expulsés sans aucune forme de compensation ni

# A letter to WCS

A Batwa father sends an urgent plea after his son is killed

Bukavu, September 20, 2017

Les Batwa d'aujourd'hui ne sont plus aussi bonne santé comme l'étaient nos grands-parents. Il faut suffisamment se battre pour trouver de la nourriture et nous sommes confrontés à de nouvelles maladies ainsi qu'à la perte de nombreuses plantes médicinales et de notre culture.

Dear Dr Samper,

My name is Mobutu Nakulire Munganga. I am a Batwa "Pygmy" from Buyungule, a village by the Kahuzi-Biega National Park.

Dans la matinée du samedi 26 août, mon autre fils était malade et je n'ai pu aller dans le parc avec mon fils Mbone Christian Nakulire, pour cueillir l'une de ces plantes médicinales qui servaient à guérir mon autre fils. The park is our ancestral homeland. Our ancestors had always lived well alongside the animals there, but we were violently evicted from it and now are suffering so badly.

The Batwa of today are not healthy like our grandparents were. We struggle to find enough to eat and are forced to cope with new diseases and the loss of many forest medicines.

Quand nous sommes arrivés à la colline de Bahaya, à l'intérieur du parc, nous avons été arrêtés par quatre gardes-parcs et l'un d'entre eux a ouvert le feu sur nous. J'ai entendu une voix proclamer « Nous devons l'éliminer » et d'autres répondre « Nous devons l'éliminer ». J'ai réussi à m'échapper mais mon fils a été tué. Il n'avait que 17 ans.

On the morning of Saturday, August 26, I went into the park with my son, Mbone Christian Nakulire, to gather one of these forest medicines, called patagondo, as my other son was unwell.

Depuis les expulsions, le parc nous a infligé de terribles souffrances. Les gens racontent que le parc n'aurait jamais perduré sans l'argent que le gouvernement belge a financé les gardes-parcs.

When we arrived at Bahaya Hill, in the park, we crossed the path of four park guards, and one opened fire on us. I was hit and I fell to the ground. I heard one voice say: "We mustn't kill his son" and others reply: "We need to get rid of him." I managed to escape but my son was shot dead. He was just 17 years old.

On m'a dit que, selon la Charte africaine, tout grand projet ayant lieu sur notre territoire nécessitait notre consentement libre et éclairé.

Since the evictions the park has brought us such suffering. People say it would not have survived without the support of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which has funded the park guards.

On m'a également dit que la WCS avait adopté une politique des droits de l'homme lui imposant de respecter ce principe.

I am told that, according to the African Charter, any major project on our land requires our free, prior and informed consent.

Et pourtant, personne n'est jamais venue chercher notre consentement pour le Parc national de Kahuzi-Biega. Alors pourquoi la WCS continue-t-elle à financer et de le soutenir pour finalement nous tuer?

I am also told that WCS has a human rights policy, which says that this principle must be respected.

Rien ne pourra jamais compenser la perte de mon garçon, mais je dépose cette plainte pour que vous puissiez nous aider, mon peuple et moi.

Yet no one has ever come to seek our consent for the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Why then does WCS continue to fund and support it?

La WCS doit honorer sa politique des droits de l'homme et nous aider à mettre fin à nos souffrances.

Nothing will ever make up for the loss of my son, but I am making this complaint so that you can help me and my people find justice and return to our land.

WCS must honor its human rights policy and help end our suffering.

Bien à vous,

Mobutu Nakulire Munganga et son épouse Mauwa M'Nachabi

**Since we were expelled from our lands, death is following us. We bury people nearly every day. The village is becoming empty.**

Batwa man, Bishuleshule<sup>65</sup>

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**June 2000**

A study describes how the Batwa were evicted from Kahuzi-Biega without any consultation and have been subjected to “scandalous abuses” since then. The investigation finds the “human cost” of the evictions to be “enormous.”

Batwa have claimed to the author that they are scapegoated for poaching carried out by others, including by park officials.<sup>66</sup>

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**January 2001**

The International Council on Human Rights Policy hear how the Batwa in the Great Lakes Region, of which Kahuzi-Biega is a part, have been denied their right to hunt and gather and are forced to endure “excessive poverty.”<sup>67</sup>

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**May 2001**

A report by the organization Forests Monitor recounts how the Batwa were evicted from their lands inside Kahuzi-Biega during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>68</sup>

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**May 2001**

A study on Kahuzi-Biega is published, which observes that indigenous people like the Batwa were not even asked for their views before being expelled from their homes in the park.

Despite the fact that the Batwa protected the fauna and flora in the forest, they found themselves “exiled, displaced, evicted.”

They are now deprived of access to their forest, “to which all their activities are linked.”<sup>69</sup>

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**We are treated like animals.**

Batwa man, Kalonge<sup>70</sup>

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**November 2003** A report is published into the marginalization of Batwa women in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

It finds that the Batwa women who were forcibly evicted from Kahuzi-Biega are still denied access to the forest and the food they rely on, consigning them to “severe poverty.”

.....

*We can't go to the park since they closed it off, and even if we bend the rules a bit, if we are caught we are threatened with death.*

Batwa woman, Chombo, April 2003<sup>71</sup>

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**April 2005** The African Commission notes how the Batwa who were evicted from Kahuzi-Biega “are now extremely poor, even destitute” and “psychologically shattered by the loss of their forests.”

The Commission questions the local authorities' claim that the Batwa pose a high risk to the park's ecosystem.<sup>72</sup>

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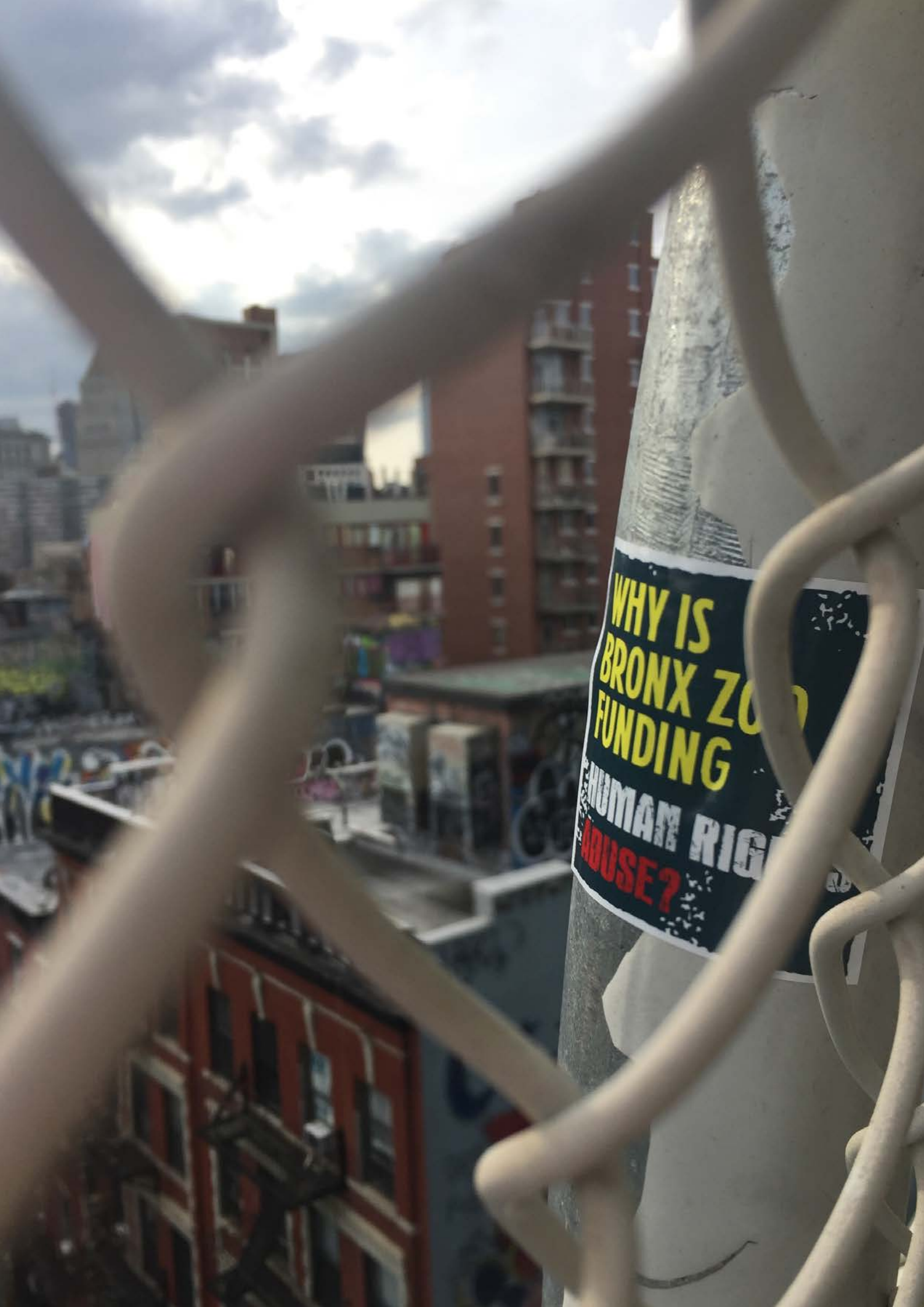
**2006** The International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs describes how the authorities at Kahuzi-Biega continue to deny the Batwa access to the park and that

“it is not uncommon for indigenous people to report that they have been shot at or branded ‘poachers’ and harassed or worse should they try to access the Park.”<sup>73</sup>

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WHY IS  
BRONX ZOO  
FUNDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
ABUSE?



**It is not uncommon for indigenous people to report that they have been shot at or branded 'poachers' and harassed or worse should they try to access the Park.**

International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2006<sup>74</sup>

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**June 2006** A report is published in the medical journal *The Lancet* on indigenous peoples' health. It considers how the health risks faced by "Pygmies" are increasing due to the loss of their lands to conservation and other interests. It includes testimony from Kahuzi-Biega.<sup>75</sup>

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**Oct. 30, 2006** A collection of seven organizations file a report with the African Commission, explaining how the consequences of the Batwa's eviction from Kahuzi-Biega are ongoing, and that the authorities continue to refuse to let them enter the park.<sup>76</sup>

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**December 2007** A researcher working for Minority Rights Group Buyungule hears from Batwa how their life was better in the forest in Kahuzi-Biega.<sup>77</sup>

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**April 30, 2008** Two organizations file a report with the African Commission that describes how the Batwa were "brutally expelled" from the park and suffer from ongoing land insecurity.<sup>78</sup>

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**December 2008** Sixty-six Batwa launch a case against the Congolese government, challenging the human rights violations they have suffered in the name of conservation.

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**There were judicial harassments, arbitrary arrests and detentions, burning of houses...**

Dr. Albert K. Barume, September 2012<sup>79</sup>

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**August 2009**

The African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities visits Kahuzi-Biega.

The mission hears that the problems faced by indigenous people around the park relate primarily to the fact that they are banned from accessing their resources in the park. It is told of the case of one man who has been imprisoned for hunting a buffalo.

The working group urges the DRC government to make sure the Batwa's court case is handled in a timely, transparent and fair way.<sup>80</sup>

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**September 2012** At a workshop on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in Copenhagen, Kahuzi-Biega is presented as a case study.

Dr Albert K. Barume explains how: "[t]he government and its supporters embarked on a policy to intimidate the Indigenous peoples who had been evicted, so that they could not even think of coming back."<sup>81</sup>

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**2013**

The Batwa bring their case against the government before the country's Supreme Court.

Four years later, in December 2017, the case remains pending.

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**October 2014**

A "road map" is approved by the park authorities, which sets out how three zones within Kahuzi-Biega will be returned to the Batwa.

However, the authorities never implement this agreement.

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**Before they would stop women from gathering firewood in the forest and stop men from gathering honey and medicines. Now they have moved on to the next stage: killing us.**

Batwa man, Buyungule, Sep. 27, 2017

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**November 2015** The Batwa lodge a formal complaint against the DRC government before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. They claim that their land rights have been violated and that, as a result, they are suffering high rates of malnutrition, disease and death.

Two years later, in December 2017, the case remains pending.

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**Aug. 27, 2017** Wildlife guards shoot a Batwa father and son from Buyungule, who are gathering medicinal herbs inside the park. The father is wounded but manages to escape, and is hospitalized for several weeks, while his 17-year-old son dies at the scene.

Bahaya

.....  
*The pain is so bad. I'm here now, disabled. When I think of my son, tears come my eyes.*

Batwa man, Buyungule, Sep. 27, 2017

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**Oct. 28, 2017** An investigation into the murder of the Batwa teenager Christian Nakulire, and into the impact of Kahuzi-Biega on the Batwa, is published in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*.<sup>82</sup>

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WILDLIFE  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY

BRONX ZOO

WHY IS  
BRONX ZOO  
FUNDING  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
ABUSE?

CUARTOS  
DE RENT  
VACIOS  
DISPONIBLES



## What should be done?

**The wildlife guards threaten us; we are afraid. We ask all those who give money to the Nouabale-Ndoki park and to the wildlife guards to come here, listen to our problems and seek our consent.**

Baka, Congo, Sept. 31, 2016

Big conservation organizations like WCS should not contribute to human rights abuses. Governments rely on the financial, technical and logistical support provided by these organizations, which must do everything they can to protect people from persecution.

Crucially, WCS and its government partners must now seek the Bayaka's and Batwa's consent if they are to continue their work in the Congo Basin, something they should have done long ago.

It is only by listening to the Bayaka and Batwa and upholding their rights that conservation organizations will be able to stamp out the systematic abuse detailed in this report. Evidence proves that tribal peoples are better at looking after their environment than anyone else. The best and most effective way to protect the rainforests of the Congo Basin is to recognize tribal peoples' collective land ownership rights, as enshrined in international laws like the African Charter and the International Labor Organization's Convention 169.

Despite the suffering that they are forced to endure in the name of conservation, many tribal people who we have spoken with still value the importance of environmental protection. If it is to work, however, it must take place on their terms.

Several communities in the Central African Republic and Congo that are affected by WCS's work recently issued urgent pleas to conservationists, calling for the opportunity to describe the abuse they face to the people who are funding it.<sup>82</sup> Eleven urged the conservationists to stop supporting the anti-poaching squads. So far their appeals have fallen on deaf ears.


Conservationists must listen to people like the Bayaka and Batwa, ask them what help they need in defending their lands, and then stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. The existing power structure must be inverted. Only then will attention and resources be fixed on the real causes of environmental destruction in the Congo Basin.

On paper, WCS already claims to respect tribal peoples' rights, and to honor the well-established principle of free, prior and informed consent. It's time for it to live up to its promises, both in the Congo Basin and around the world, and understand that helping tribal peoples defend their land rights is the key to conservation.

Tribal peoples are the best conservationists and guardians of the natural world, and should be at the forefront of the environmental movement, not its victims.



# Subway

 Why is  
Bronx Zoo  
funding  
**HUMAN RIGHTS  
ABUSE?**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> s

<sup>2</sup> See for example Ayari and Counsell (in press).

<sup>3</sup> This word is considered pejorative and avoided by some tribespeople, but used by others as a convenient and easily recognized way of describing themselves. Because it is the most widely understood term, Survival has chosen to use it, while emphasizing that it is problematic.

<sup>4</sup> The African Charter, for example, which has been ratified by all governments in the Congo Basin, requires that any major project on the Bayaka and Batwa's must receive their free, prior and informed consent before it can start.

<sup>5</sup> Spiro (2009: xi; 158)

<sup>6</sup> Grant (1933: 157).

<sup>7</sup> in *New York Times* (1906: 2), quoted in Newkirk (2015: 23).

<sup>8</sup> Grant (1933: 283-284).

<sup>9</sup> See Newkirk (2015) for the most detailed reconstruction to date of Ota Benga's life.

<sup>10</sup> in *New York Times* (2006).

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> House of Representatives (2003: 56-57).

<sup>13</sup> Roosevelt (1889-1896: 334-335) quoted in Gossett (1997: 238).

<sup>14</sup> Samuel Verner gave many conflicting accounts of how he encountered Ota Benga (see Newkirk 2015: 117-118). The point on this map is based on an interview he gave *Harper's Weekly* in

2014.

<sup>15</sup> House of Representatives (2003: 56-57)

<sup>16</sup> in Chadwick (1995: 36)

<sup>17</sup> See for example Potapov et al. (2017)

<sup>18</sup> Agnimbat Emeka et al. (2016: 13)

<sup>19</sup> Fay (1999)

<sup>20</sup> in Eshelby (2004). We have changed the word "ecoguards" to "wildlife guards," for the sake of comprehension.

<sup>21</sup> in Sarno (1998: 12)

<sup>22</sup> IRIN News (2004)

<sup>23</sup> Greenpeace (2005: 30)

<sup>24</sup> Eshelby (2004)

<sup>25</sup> Greenpeace (2005: 30)

<sup>26</sup> WCS-Congo (2005: 1)

<sup>27</sup> L'Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme (OCDH) (2005: 7)

<sup>28</sup> Lewis (2014: 131). We have changed the word "eco-guards" to "wildlife guards" for the sake of comprehension.

<sup>29</sup> Greenpeace (2005: 28, 30). We have changed the word "eco-guards" to "wildlife guards" for the sake of comprehension.

<sup>30</sup> OCDH (2005: 6)

<sup>31</sup> This community did not want to be identified further, out of fear of reprisals.

<sup>32</sup> OCDH (2005: 5)

<sup>33</sup> OCDH and The Rainforest Foundation (2006: 5)



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- <sup>34</sup> Labrousse (2006)
- <sup>35</sup> Lewis and Nelson (2007: 5)
- <sup>36</sup> Diène (2007: 10)
- <sup>37</sup> Lewis, Freeman and Borreill (2008: 41)
- <sup>38</sup> UNICEF (2008: 11)
- <sup>39</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2009: 5)
- <sup>40</sup> Mampouya (2009)
- <sup>41</sup> Borreill et al. (2013: 85)
- <sup>42</sup> This community did not want to be identified further, out of fear of reprisals.
- <sup>43</sup> Lewis (2012: 22-23)
- <sup>44</sup> Riddell (2013: 207, 214-215)
- <sup>45</sup> Vitos et al. (2013: 3). We have changed the word “Eco-guards” to “Wildlife guards” for the sake of comprehension.
- <sup>46</sup> Dr. Marianne Reimert, personal communication dated September 7, 2015. We have changed the word “ecoguards” and “ecoguard” to “wildlife guards” and “wildlife guard” for the sake of comprehension.
- <sup>47</sup> Borreill et al. (2013: 84, 107)
- <sup>48</sup> Amougou and Woodburne (2014: 106, 108). We have changed the word “eco-guards” to “wildlife guards” for the sake of comprehension.
- <sup>49</sup> SGS (2014: 114-115)
- <sup>50</sup> Reimert (2015: 1033)
- <sup>51</sup> Iff (2015: 211). We have changed the word “eco-guards” to “wildlife guards” for the sake of comprehension.
- <sup>52</sup> Ayari and Counsell (in press)
- <sup>53</sup> Agnimbat Emeka et al. (2016: 4, 11)
- <sup>54</sup> Lewis (2016: 379)
- <sup>55</sup> OCDH & RENAPAC (2017). See Hardin et al. (2014) for a discussion of the results of a medical study that showed a catastrophic decline in Bayaka health in the Central African Republic over a 40-year period, which the authors attributed partly to harmful impact of conservation.
- <sup>56</sup> OCDH (2017: 42)
- <sup>57</sup> Johnson (2014)
- <sup>58</sup> See for example Moloo (2016a; 2016b); Strohlic (2017).
- <sup>59</sup> in Barume (2000: 80)
- <sup>60</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>61</sup> Barume (2000: 82-84)
- <sup>62</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>63</sup> Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe (1996: 4)
- <sup>64</sup> Barume (2000: 86)
- <sup>65</sup> in Barume (2000: 87-88)
- <sup>66</sup> Lewis (2000: 21-22)
- <sup>67</sup> Mugarura & Ndemeye (2001: 5)
- <sup>68</sup> Forests Monitor (2001: 41)
- <sup>69</sup> Diwa Mutimanwa (2001: 95; 99)
- <sup>70</sup> in Barume (2000: 93)
- <sup>71</sup> Jackson (2003: 8; 30)
- <sup>72</sup> ACHPR (2005: 14)



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<sup>73</sup> Mulvagh (2006: 2)

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Ohenjo et al. (2006: 1939)

<sup>76</sup> CAMV et al. (2006: 14)

<sup>77</sup> Warrilow (2008: 15)

<sup>78</sup> CAMV and FPP (2008: 25)

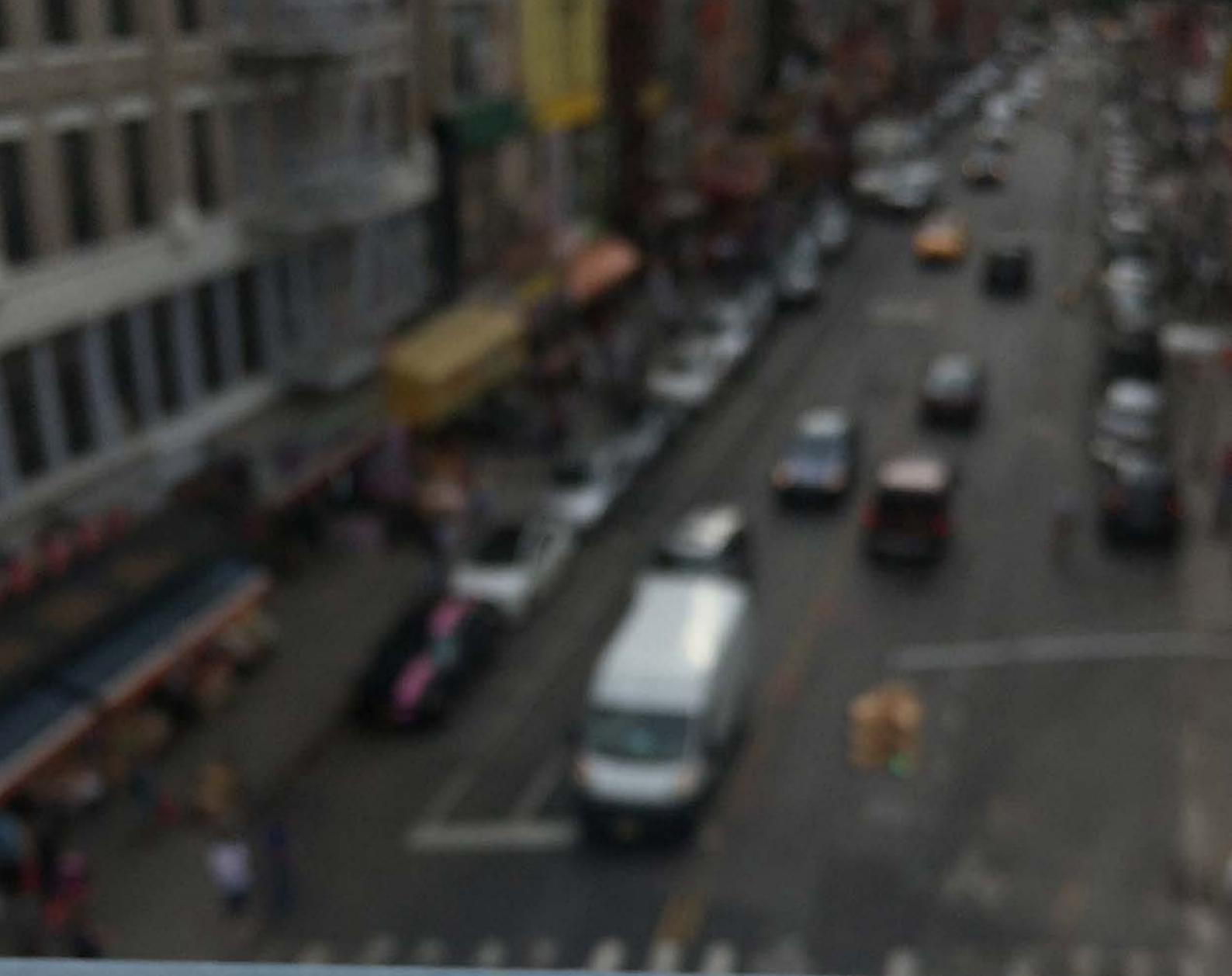
<sup>79</sup> IWGIA (2013: 42)


<sup>80</sup> ACHPR and IWGIA (2011)

<sup>81</sup> IWGIA (2013: 42-43)

<sup>82</sup> Klawitter (2017)

<sup>83</sup> These letters can be viewed at [assets.survivalinternational.org/documents/1603/baka-bayaka-open-letters-2016.pdf](https://assets.survivalinternational.org/documents/1603/baka-bayaka-open-letters-2016.pdf).



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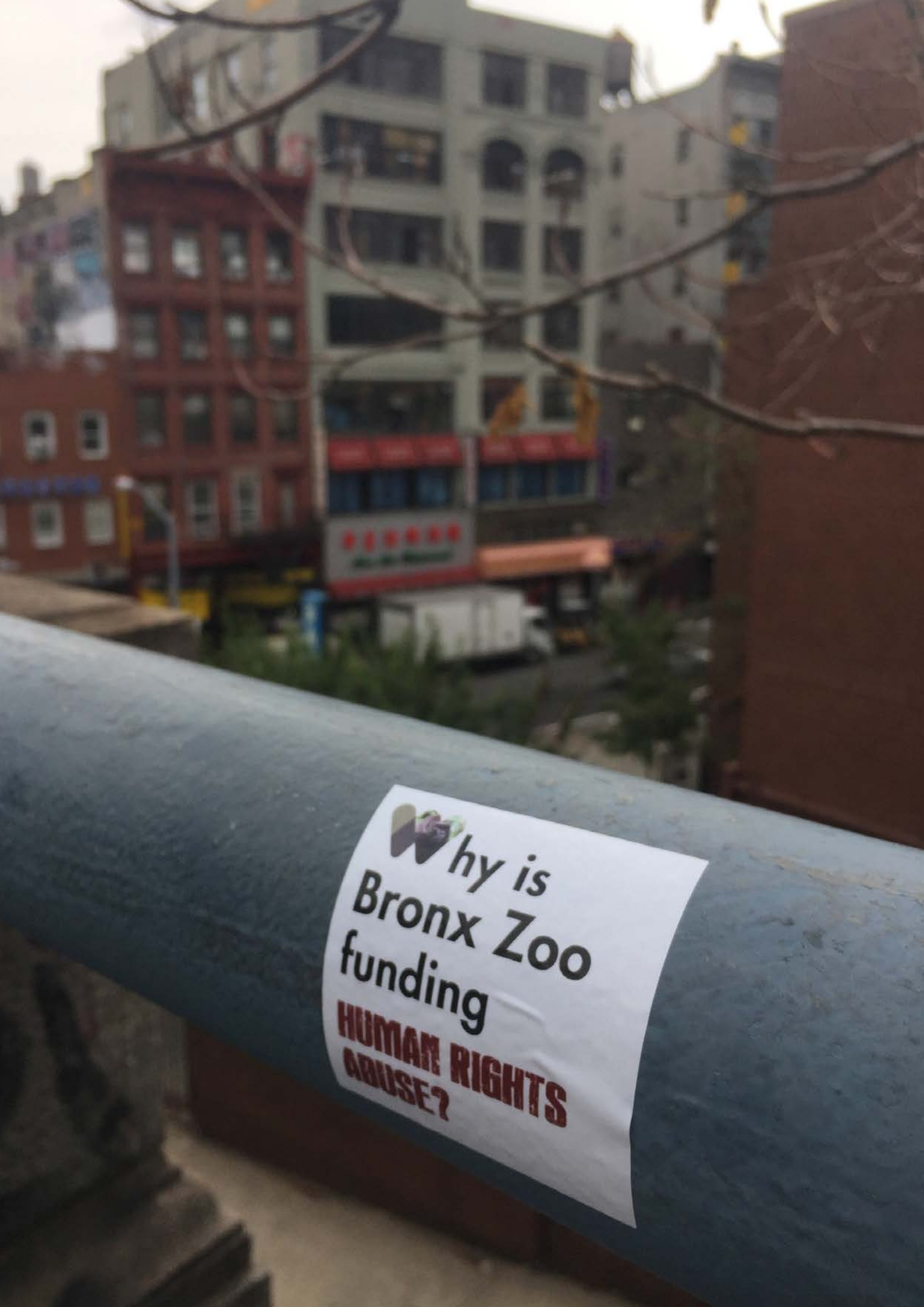







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Bukavu, September 20, 2017

Dear Dr Samper,

My name is Mobutu Nakulire Munganga. I am a Twa Pygmy from Buyungule, a village by the Kahuzi-Biega National Park.

The park is our ancestral homeland. Our ancestors had always lived well alongside the animals there, but we were violently evicted from it and now are suffering so badly.

The Batwa of today are not healthy like our grandparents were. We struggle to find enough to eat and are forced to cope with new diseases and the loss of many forest medicines.

On the morning of Saturday, August 26, I went into the park with my son, Mbone Christian Nakulire, to gather one of these forest medicines, called patagondo, as my other son was unwell.

When we arrived at Bahaya Hill, in the park, we crossed the path of four park guards, and one opened fire on us. I was hit and I fell to the ground. I heard one voice say: "We mustn't kill his son" and others reply: "We need to get rid of him." I managed to escape but my son was shot dead. He was just 17 years old.

Since the evictions the park has brought us such suffering. People say it would not have survived without the support of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which has funded the park guards.

I am told that, according to the African Charter, any major project on our land requires our free, prior and informed consent.

I am also told that WCS has a human rights policy, which says that this principle must be respected.

Yet no one has ever come to seek our consent for the Kahuzi-Biega National Park. Why then does WCS continue to fund and support it?

Nothing will ever make up for the loss of my son, but I am making this complaint so that you can help me and my people find justice and return to our land.

WCS must honor its human rights policy and help end our suffering.

Bien à vous,

Mobutu Nakulire Munganga

et son épouse Mauwa M'Nachabi





The New York Times

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TO FREE CAGED PYGMY**

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