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Weekly Update

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LEAD STORY

July 17, 2024

Kenya: Lipton tea estates sale to firm linked to human rights abuses sparks concerns

Business Daily; Financial Times

Lipton has announced the sale of its Kenyan tea estates to **Browns Investments**, a subsidiary of Sri Lankan conglomerate **LOLC Holdings**. The tea estates are on land that was violently taken from the Kipsigis and Talai clans in the early 20th century. Members of the local community have expressed concerns about the sale, including that Lipton did not secure free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in line with its Responsible Sourcing Policy. A consortium of Kenyan cooperatives offered to match Browns' bid, aiming to restore the land to Indigenous Peoples and address historical injustices. Lipton reportedly ignored this offer. Additionally, **LOLC Holdings**, **Browns'** majority shareholder, is under investigation for alleged human rights abuses in Cambodia. **Lipton's** decision to proceed with the sale despite these allegations has sparked further controversy.

We invited **Lipton** to respond to the allegations. It said: 'All the parties who expressed an interest in acquiring these tea estates were fairly considered...', stating the **Browns** offer was chosen based on its track record in the sector and ability to sustain large-scale tea estates. **Lipton** stated that FPIC was not applicable in this case as it concerns a 'private sale of business ownership which does not alter community resources.' **Lipton** further said that questions about **Browns** and **LOLC Holdings** should be directed to them. We previously invited **LOLC Holdings** to respond to the allegations of human rights abuses in Cambodia; it did not.