

What Obama Didn't Say

By Beth Tuckey, Associate Director

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On Saturday, July 11th, President Obama made a major speech to the Ghanaian Parliament on U.S. engagement with the continent. His message was clear: good governance is a prerequisite for effective development and “Africa’s future is up to Africans.” AFJN applauds Obama’s strong stand against irresponsible African leaders. However, we also have serious concerns about the reality of U.S. policy in Africa and the impact of the West on the continent’s ability to pull itself out of the poverty cycle. Sadly, this was entirely absent from Obama’s speech.



President Barack Obama spoke about good governance and Africa’s role in its own development.

President Obama encouraged Africa to stop “pointing fingers” at the “colonial map” and said that the “West is not responsible for... wars in which children are enlisted as combatants.” Yet, the weapons that the U.S. and Russia gave to governments and groups during the Cold War continue to be used to recruit child soldiers. Today’s arms shipments often fall into the hands of young rebels who abuse civilian populations. There is no doubt that governments in Africa can do better to fight corruption, to control their borders, and to develop strong institutions, but the U.S. must also recognize its continued contribution to Africa’s problems through neocolonial policies.

If Obama was serious about promoting prosperity on the African continent, he would have addressed U.S. farm policy and the subsidies given to large corporations that undermine farmers in Africa. He would have made it clear that despite the numbers written in his 2010 budget request, he will refuse to give Nigeria any military aid unless its attacks against civilians in the Niger Delta stop. He would have sent a message to U.S.-

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found on our website.

based corporations that he will not tolerate exploitation of African workers on plantations, in mines, or on farms. President Obama has the power to change these policies, and he cannot expect African leaders to act more responsibly if he himself does not.

Actions speak louder than words, so the real test of Obama’s commitment to democracy and good governance will come when he meets with someone like Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni and tells him that unless he changes his ways, the U.S. will refuse continued support, particularly military aid. AFJN is grateful to have a President who seeks a relationship of mutual respect and mutual responsibility with Africa, but we also know that in order for that vision to become a reality, U.S. citizens will need to hold him accountable to his words.

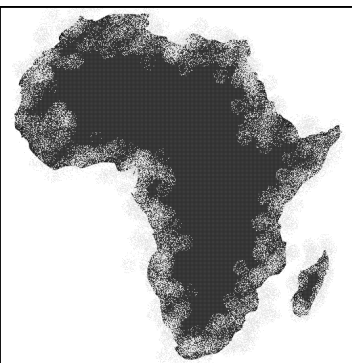
In the weeks leading up to Obama’s arrival in Accra, Ghana, Africa Faith and Justice Network wrote letters, articles, and briefs to prepare for his trip. Our goal was to highlight the issues we see as critical to advancing a just U.S.-Africa policy, and to set forth a framework that provides our members and readers with an idea of what Obama must do to act in solidarity with Africa.

As a collaborative effort with the Catholic Task Force on Africa, AFJN wrote a letter to the White House that briefly touched on many of the most important issues facing Africa today, particularly with regard to U.S. policy. Similarly, in conjunction with 31 civil society and advocacy organizations – both here in the U.S. and in Africa – AFJN outlined a set of broad principles that must govern any new path in U.S.-Africa relations. Both letters can be

Furthermore, three days before Obama’s historic speech to the Ghanaian parliament, AFJN assisted in hosting a public event in Washington that touched on issues ranging from AFRICOM to genetically modified seeds. In preparation for that event, we took an active role in writing a “Media Briefing Booklet” that details our vision for a more equitable relationship with Africa (also available on our website). It covers security, agriculture, health, economic and ecological justice, corporate social responsibility, and conflict areas. Although originally designed as a resource for the media who were writing stories on the trip, we will continue to use it in consultations with the administration and Congress.

Finally, AFJN’s own analysis can be found on our website – “Obama Trip to Ghana, Rewriting U.S.-Africa Policy: What are the Issues?” We encourage you to read the piece and to help us in shaping the Obama administration’s approach to Africa. Obama has yet to make it clear exactly what his policy will be toward the continent, despite his historic speech in Accra. It is our job to hold him accountable to his message of good governance and to push him to create positive policies in the fields of agriculture, militarism, and corporate responsibility, among others. We must also join him by giving up the benefits we receive from unbalanced relations with Africa; we must buy fair trade certified goods, stop buying from irresponsible U.S. companies, and do our part to reverse climate change. Although it is still early in his first term, we must demand a new relationship with Africa from a President whose message of change resonates throughout the continent.

“There is no doubt that governments in Africa can do better to fight corruption, to control their borders, and to develop strong institutions, but the U.S. must also recognize its continued contribution to Africa’s problems through neocolonial policies.”



Save the Date!

AFJN’s 2010 Conference and Member Meeting will take place April 17th–19th at the Holiday Inn in Rosslyn, VA.

Join us for workshops on AFJN’s most important Africa policy issues, forums on how to organize in your church or university, a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill, and a keynote address by Rev. Peter Henriot, SJ! Stay tuned for more details!

Toward the 2009 Africa Synod: An Interview with Fr. Pius Rutechura

By Rocco Puopolo s.x., Executive Director

AFJN recently facilitated Fr. Pius Rutechura's visit to Washington, DC. He is the secretary general of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) which extends from Sudan to Zambia, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. Fr. Rocco was able to interview him regarding the upcoming African Synod to be held in Rome from October 5th to 25th.

Preparation for this Synod has been ongoing for the past three years. What has interested the churches on the grassroots level the most with the theme of this Synod focused on Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace?

Following from the first African Synod, we wished to review the concept of the Church as Family of God and *Diakonia* (Service to others) being entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, justice, and peace. There is the awareness of being sent forth to bring about justice and peace as part of proclaiming the kingdom of God. It is a very timely topic due to the many conflicts that are happening in Africa. It can be a real challenge for the Church to become this instrument of reconciliation, peace, and justice for the people of Africa.

How has the preparation for this synod happened in the AMECEA region?

We were able to make great use of the media, especially through a media news service housed in Nairobi. Once we received the guiding document called the *Lineamenta*, we were able to quickly translate it into languages of the region, such as Swahil and others regional languages. There were many attempts to study and respond to the questionnaire found in this guiding document in national, diocesan, and local groups, and among religious communities and movements.

All of the eight AMECEA national conferences responded to the issues that were pertinent to their situation, some examples being: Uganda focused on the long standing conflict in the north with its need for reconciliation and peace; Kenya reviewed the violence of last year with the hope of focusing on the values of belongingness as opposed to ethnicity; and Ethiopia looked at what it means to be a Christian Church and persons of peace as a minority in that country. All the various particular insights from

each country found a place in the summary. Then all these responses were sent to the eight national episcopal conferences of AMECEA where synthesis' were put together and sent to the preparatory committee by October 2008 in Rome.

As a region, we went a step further and called together the 48 delegates to the Synod from the AMECEA region in March 2009 and held a workshop with the help of CRS to shape the prophetic voice of the region. It became an important effort that better articulated issues from the preparatory documentation and also captured some gaps that may have come from the individual responses previously sent. Two such topics were on women and youth issues. Through that workshop, the bishops appointed a team of advisors from the region that will accompany them to the Synod. This team will work on these issues, before, during *and after* the Synod. One thing we learned from the first Synod in 1994 was that not much follow-up post-Synod was planned and executed. Much was left to individual initiative, and lack of coordination and direction resulted in little follow-up. The report from this meeting was sent to all the bishops throughout Africa for their information.

And then there was the presentation of the working document for the Synod, called the *Instrumentum Laboris*. Pope Benedict travelled to Cameroon to present this document to the Church in Africa and most of the Bishop Presidents of the conferences of AMECEA traveled to Cameroon for that step. Now each episcopal conference is in the



Fr. Pius Rutechura at the International Young Christian Student Movement Conference in Kampala in 2007.

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D.R. Congo: A Call for Truth and Reconciliation

By Bahati Ntama Jacques, Policy Analyst

Justice in Democratic Republic of the Congo is mainly accessible to and protects the powerful, those who run the system, the politically connected, and the rich who influence decision making and can pay for years of trials. The poor and powerless are prosecuted and exploited with little or no hope except by subscribing to indigenous mechanisms of justice and other extra-judicial methods of mediation.

On the occasion of the 49th anniversary of Congolese independence on June 30, 2009, Congolese President Joseph Kabila said: "Today, justice is itself on the bench of the

against the Congolese people.

In 1996, Congo was invaded by its neighbor Rwanda, provoking a war that involved many Congolese warlords who were politically positioning themselves and serving Rwanda's interests. Mediators brokered a peace deal during negotiations in Sun City, South Africa in 2003. The peace agreement included a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as one of the institutions of the transitional government and the democratic process. It was signed into law (n0 04/018) by the transitional government president, Joseph Kabila, in 2004. The TRC was not a criminal court, rather, it originated as "a forum for dialogue and unification of the Congolese people by persuasion instead of constraint, but ended up mainly managing pre-electoral, electoral and post electoral conflicts and reconciliation of political and military actors," said TRC's President Bishop Jean-Luc Ndong. In a speech in 2004, Bishop Jean-Luc, said that its objectives were to reestablish the

"Leaders of the transitional government included warlords and members of the former dictatorial regime who ruined the country for 32 years. Because they were on the list of the accused, they prevented the TRC from revealing the whole truth."

accused. ...It is time for agents of justice to choose their camp: either serve or more martyrize a people already ravaged and tested by years of conflict and violence." The Catholic Bishops echoed the president's message on July 10 in these terms: "The weakening of the state's authority is mainly felt by the people in our neighborhoods and villages where assassinations, rape, and robbery occur without punishment..." For many years, the Congolese people have been calling for justice to restore state authority and the people's rights, but this has yet to materialize.

Establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Can the Congo set the clock forward without setting it back and correct the mistakes that have been made? Can it deal with more than three decades of dictatorship followed by 13 years of war that claimed approximately 6 million lives? Before the war, the late President Mobutu tried to answer the people's cry for justice, accountability, and good governance by agreeing to hold a National Conference ("Conference Nationale Souveraine") led by Bishop Monsengwo Pasinya in 1991. Soon after, he boycotted the conference before it finished its work because he and his collaborators did not want to face the truth and account for crimes, mismanagement, and all kinds of violations

truth, promote peace, justice, reparation, forgiveness, and reconciliation in order to consolidate national unity. This included accompanying Congolese citizens in the transition; preventing and managing conflict by mediation; establishing the truth about political, social, and economic violations that happened in DRC between 1960-2003; leading efforts to heal trauma; and reestablishing trust between different Congolese ethnic communities and encouraging pacific cohabitation and eradicating tribalism, regionalism, intolerance, exclusion, and hate in its all forms.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Mission Overturned

In 2008, at the peace conference in Goma, Bishop Jean-Luc attributed the failure of the TRC to an unfavorable political condition. Leaders of the transitional government included warlords and members of the former dictatorial regime who ruined the country for 32 years. Because they were on the list of the accused, they prevented the TRC from revealing the whole truth. They undermined its efforts by violating its independence and its financial autonomy.

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Building Peace at the Grassroots: The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI)

By Barbara Vi Ho, Intern

While the Ugandan government and international bodies are once again considering ways to arrest or forcibly remove Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a multi-faith group of religious leaders is working earnestly to draw Kony back to the peace negotiation table.

The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), a community-based organization established in 1997, brings together the heads of the Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox and Islamic religions, and involves nominated youth, men and women representatives with a common goal: to realize true peace and development in Uganda. As moral guardians in northern Uganda, the ARLPI have played a role in peace talks, serving as neutral observers and advisors to mediators. Their message is clear: an unyielding position against the ICC arrest warrants for Kony and his commanders, and an unwavering belief in forgiveness and reintegration of the notorious rebels.



A cross near the Kitgum District Government Headquarters in northern Uganda.

After Uganda (as well as its neighboring countries) suffered at the hands of the LRA for 23 years, it comes as a surprise to many that what the Acholi people of northern Uganda desire most is to *forgive* and welcome offenders back into the community. Supporters of the ICC arrest warrants argue against impunity and amnesty for these criminals. But for Father Matthew Ojara, an influential religious leader and member of the ARLPI, these drawn identities separating individuals into "enemies" and "allies," "criminals" and "victims" do not define individuals appropriately. It's not that he denies that there were crimes committed, or that there were victims who suffered; rather, his message is that above everything else, we all belong together in one group - *humanity*.

Reconciliation Even for Kony

In the Acholi culture, you and I are all brothers and sisters,

interdependent, undeniably connected to one another in this web of humanity. As much as he has done wrong, Kony is a brother to us all, so much that it is "not even an option to ostracize one's brother," without due process. Instead, Father Ojara believes that in order to bring true peace and justice, one must extend the hand of forgiveness and bring former rebels and formerly abducted persons back home, most of whom were children when they were forced to serve as soldiers, carriers, and commanders' wives. It is this nonviolent approach toward justice that the ARLPI has taken – an approach the West has difficulty understanding.

The ARLPI plays an active role in their communities, leading traditional reconciliation processes, organizing peace sensitization seminars, collecting and documenting songs and proverbs on reconciliation and peace, and organizing community workshops and meetings when requested by village members to resolve issues brought forth once a returnee comes home.

After the initial ceremonies, communities still face the challenge of restoring relationships with one another and regaining trust. Healthy relationships amongst the people is at the core of a peaceful society. It is not an easy task. As Bishop Ochola II, another important leader of the ARLPI, so eloquently explained, "If relationships are restored, they will bring healing and transformation" among offended and offender, while punishment only leads to polarization and disunity which will only stall peace.

Despite the international push for a retributive approach to justice and peace, the ARLPI remain grounded in the belief that violence begets violence. What keeps them driven is the realization that their nonviolent, grassroots approach has the power to truly transform the lives of all in their home country. Trying to build peace, person by person, village by village, is a slow process indeed, but day by

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day, ARLPI members confront this responsibility with an unwavering commitment to justice, peace, and reconcilia-

tion. Africa Faith and Justice Network stands by them in support of their nonviolent approach to resolving the enduring LRA crisis affecting the people of the Great Lakes region.

Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009

For those of you who are on our email blast list, you've probably been following our work on the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament (LRA) and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009 (S. 1067, H.R. 2478). (If you aren't on our eNetwork, visit us at www.afjn.org and join!) Although we support the development and transitional justice aspects of the bill, we are deeply concerned about the statement of policy that could allow AFRICOM to “apprehend or otherwise remove Joseph Kony from the battlefield.”

To counter this statement, we sent an online petition out to our email list and have since received 586 signatures! This is great progress, so thanks to all of you who took action. We are continuing to write articles, meet with Congressional staff, and dialogue about the issue, but we need you to keep the pressure on your elected representatives. Make sure they know that you want support for development and restorative justice, but that you do not want to see the U.S. military involved in another strike against the LRA in Congo.

At the time of writing, the legislation has 21 co-sponsors in the Senate and 93 co-sponsors in the House. This is a tremendous showing of support for an Africa-related issue, which could mean that the bill will come up for a floor vote soon. We need you to work quickly – write letters, make phone calls, and tell your friends and family that the future stability of the Great Lakes Region will rest partly on what action is taken against the LRA.

The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (see above article) has voiced their concerns about this section of the bill, as has Riek Machar, Vice President of South Sudan and Chief Negotiator in the Juba Peace Process. But Congress needs to hear from their constituents! Please visit our website to learn more about this issue and contact us if you would like to be more involved!

(“SYNOD” continued from page 3)

process of studying this working document and bringing together their findings and issues to the advisory team through the AMECEA Secretariat. The Advisory team will then meet in September before traveling to Rome to further distill input that comes from the many Justice and Peace Networks working on conflict and reconciliation, including Ecumenical groups and other non-governmental groups.

What do you hope will come out of this Synod?

What I hope for is that we are able to become a church that is credible, more visible, and proactive when addressing issues of justice, reconciliation, and peace as integral parts of the mission of the Church. We hope for a church that steps up and makes efforts to reconciling African societies. We want a church that would have perimeters of justice within itself as well as among all peoples. Peace needs to be fostered as a virtue, as Jesus desired, which the world cannot give. If this can happen, we can reach our goal.

In the past, AFJN has been very connected to the hopes and struggles of our contacts on the continent. Over the past two years, we have tried to link with those of you in the African Church to keep our members up to date on your preparations for the Synod. Do you have any thoughts on how to improve those links?

We need to take into consideration the challenges we still have on the continent when it comes to electricity and internet. We use printed material for the most part. All of our summaries and publications are in print only. However, I have learned during this visit that there may be ways to have you spread these studies through the networks you are part of, scanning material and making it available on various websites. We can try to initiate this and see if it improves the situation. But, I would recommend encouraging visits, personal exchanges, and discussions on issues that we all are concerned about. It would become a balance between the modern means of communication and the human face. So, I do hope to see you at the Synod in October!

(“TRC” continued from page 4)

In addition, the international community disapproved of the establishment of the commission during the transition. It predicted that it would be hard to carry out investigations in militarized zones in the Kivu provinces and that those in power would not allow the truth to be told because of their own complicity in crime. So, they withheld their assistance and hardly collaborated. Finally, Bishop Jean-Luc recommended the creation of a new National Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a National Pacification Commission and a Follow-Up Commission to carry

out the recommendations to be made by the first two commissions.

In the interest of peace, justice, and reconciliation, Africa Faith and Justice Network believes that an independent Truth and Reconciliation Commission would be a step forward for a stable and unified Congo. In our advocacy efforts to the US government, we urge the US government to encourage and support this call by the Congolese people to their government. The success of this program depends on the participation of the grassroots – it will empower them and take them from the margin to the center.



The Congolese flag with the city of Goma in the background.

D.R. Congo is large and difficult to govern. It is hoped that through reconciliation processes, the state might unify more easily under one flag.

Beth, Thanks!

Please join me in offering warm and heartfelt thanks to Beth Tuckey for her two years of service to AFJN in our Washington office. She was an intern at AFJN during the summer of 2006 and returned the following June as our Associate Director for Program Development and Policy. She brought to AFJN a keen sense of justice and a passion for Africa. Her professional skills in communication, writing, and analysis helped us produce the newsletter and website, and her personal outreach on Capitol Hill and in the advocacy community solidified our work at AFJN. Her advocacy on AFRICOM and the militarization of Africa was significant. She will be deeply missed. We wish her every blessing as she moves on to Boston in August.



L to R: AFJN’s Bahati Ntama, author and former child soldier Ishmael Beah, Beth Tuckey, and AFJN Director Rocco Puopolo at AFJN’s 25th Anniversary Conference in April 2008.

I am pleased to announce that Allison Burket, another former intern, will take up the position that Beth held in our office. Allison recently graduated from Kenyon College in Ohio, majoring in International Studies and concentrating on Africa. We know that no one can replace Beth, but Allison will bring her own extraordinary gifts and skills to our office. Welcome Allison! —Fr. Rocco Puopolo, Executive Director

→ Don’t forget! For more on the African Synod, visit www.yesafricamatters.org.

Africa Faith and Justice Network, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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Advocacy for justice and peace in Africa doesn't just happen. AFJN needs your help and participation! Thank you for your financial support.

