



A R O U N D Africa

Jan-March 2014

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“If you want peace, work for justice.”
-Pope Paul VI

Central African Republic and Witnessing to Religious Values

By Aniedi Okure, OP, AFJN Executive Director

March 18, 2014 at the White House Conference Center, three prominent religious leaders from Central African Republic (CAR), Archbishop Dieu-donne Nzapalainga of Bangui, Chief Imam Omar Kabine Layama, President of CAR Islamic Community and Reverend Nicolas



From second left: Archbishop Nzapalainga, Chief Imam Layama, Rev. Gbangou and Bishop Holley of Washington (far end of left side)

Guerkoyame Gbangou, Chair of Executive Committee of the Alliance of Evangelicals in CAR, held a roundtable conversation with religious leaders in the Washington DC Metro area about the situation in CAR. They noted that they were in the US to let us know “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth” and seek assistance to end the conflict.

Urgent needs for CAR

Observing that a small group of radicals hold the country hostage and continue to sow seeds of division, the religious leaders noted that their number one concern is to disarm the Seleka, the anti-Balaka and the LRA operating in the CAR, attend to the problem of child soldiers, and bring security. Western media, they noted, have bought into the extremist propaganda of a religious-based genocide and continue to chase the worst of the conflict for “news”.

Atrocities committed by both sides

No doubt, atrocities have been committed by both Muslims and Christians. The Seleka movement, made up of about 80% Muslims, whose officers were mostly foreigners from Sudan, Niger and Chad, committed untold atrocities against Christians, burning down churches, dragging people out of hospitals and killing them, atrocities that left thousands dead. Unfortunately, Muslim preachers did not condemn these atrocities, making the rest of the community conclude that Muslims were out to exterminate the Christians. In the post Seleka terror reign the anti-Balaka movement has

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carried out retaliatory attacks against the Muslim community, including killings, burning down Mosques and preventing Muslims from going to hospitals to get treatment. The Catholic Church in CAR has strongly condemned the actions of the anti-Balaka movement both in writing and from the pulpit.

A witness to religious values

The Catholic Church has turned many of her churches into shelters for Muslims fleeing violence. Chief Imam Layama told the roundtable gathering that his house was burnt down by the anti-Balaka militia and that he is now staying with the Catholic Archbishop of Bangui. The Seleka and anti-Balaka activities have introduced divisions into CAR community that did not exist before the war. There is an urgent need to bridge these divisions. **“We want reconciliation, but reconciliation that is grounded in justice,”** said Chief Imam Layama. Asked what the Muslim community in the US can do to support the Muslim community in CAR, Chief Imam Layama replied that the Imams in CAR, most of whom assumed ministry by succession, need training in genuine Islamic theology and practice so they can guide the community. He also pointed out the need to rebuild both mosques and churches bearing in mind that atrocities were committed by both sides; schools are melting pots for children regardless of their religious affiliation.

An unanswered question

The puzzle remains: how did a mostly foreign militia estimated at over 20,000 become so organized as to take over another country, depose a president and terrorize its citizens? Who funded, recruited, and organized them? How and where did the militia obtain their weapons and who is behind it all? It is vital to lasting peace that the CAR and the Africa Union tackle this issue to prevent such tragedies from occurring in the future.

Solidarity with the people of CAR

The Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) stands in solidarity with **all** the peoples of Central African Republic. AFJN condemns the atrocities of the anti-Balaka militia and their shedding of blood (committed under the guise of “retaliation”) in the strongest terms. We join CAR’s religious leaders in calling on the international community to double their efforts to disarm the factions and stop the atrocities in CAR.



**SAVE THE DATE:
ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS
April 17-20, 2015**

At this year’s ecumenical gathering to advocate for peace AFJN led the Africa track of 6 workshops on topics like restorative justice, drones, the roots of violence, and nonviolent peace-forces. The workshops were well attended and received. For more info please visit www.advocacydays.org.

Marge Clark, (with Network) is one of the coordinators of Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Here she addresses the crowd of over 700 participants in front of 1000 cranes, hung to symbolize the gathering’s journey toward peace. *Photo: EAD*

Sowing Seeds for Justice: The Empowerment Project in Ghana

By Michael Murphy, AFJN Consultant

In May Father Aniedi Okure will travel to Accra, Ghana to help launch the first pilot project in AFJN's Empowerment program. AFJN has received initial grant funds from the Institute for Policy Research at Catholic University and Be The Change Foundation to support this initiative.

Accra Catholic Archbishop, Charles Palmer-Buckle, is keen on having his archdiocese as the first pilot site. He has designated his Justice and Peace office to take the lead on the project. Current plans are to base the project at the grassroots level within deaneries. The archdiocese will bring representatives from several parishes for a three-day-training session in civic engagement, community organizing, and the role of Catholic Social Teachings in promoting just governance. Representatives will bring their local community issues forward and receive counsel on advocacy techniques, thus beginning hands-on training for the larger social issues. After the training, a team including the Justice and Peace office and Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) staff and will follow up with participants and look for ways to spread the effort to additional parishes and communities.



AFJN team meeting with our partners at the Institute for Policy Research at Catholic University.

With start-up funding now in hand, Father Okure will work with archdiocesan leaders in Accra to develop specific implementation plans and budgets. Staff from SECAM will also be involved in the planning.

Last year SECAM released a pastoral letter titled "Governance, Common Good and Democratic Transitions in Africa." The pastoral letter sets out principles for fighting corruption and for promoting peaceful democratic transitions in government. It highlights this area as a major priority for the African bishops, particularly in view of the church's preferential option for the poor, and calls for support for its implementation. AFJN's new project is designed to do just that.

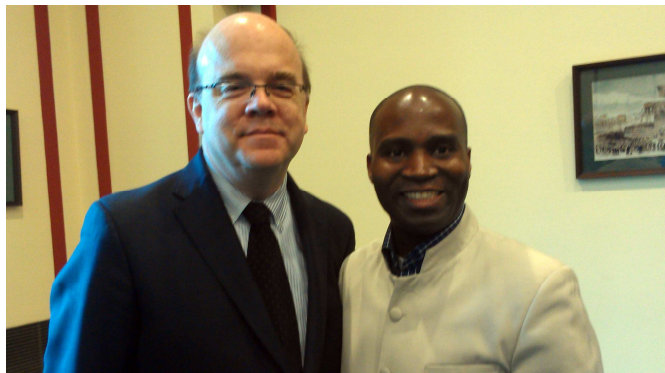
Kleptocracy: US Won't Be a Harbor for Stolen Assets

We are encouraged by the US Justice Department announcement, made on March 5, 2014, about the asset freeze of "\$458 million in corruption proceeds hidden in bank accounts around the world by former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha and conspirators" under the **Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative**. Anyone with information about suspicious assets in the US (money in bank accounts or property) linked to African leaders should send an email to kleptocracy@usdoj.gov. This also applies to African hu-

man rights violators and war criminals in the US, or who plan to travel to the US. Simply call 1-800-813-5863 or email hrsptips@usdoj.gov. You can also contact Africa Faith and Justice Network at afjn@afjn.org or 202-817-3670 and we will help you channel your information to proper authorities. Identities of callers are protected, or you may remain anonymous.

Supporting Women, Peace, and Justice

On February 25, 2014, AFJN policy analyst Jacques Bahati spoke and participated in the advocacy day that concluded Hear Her Voice, a conference focused on women’s issues in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, organized by our close partners Jewish World Watch and The Enough Project. Representatives Jim McGovern, Ed Royce, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs and Nancy Pelosi, Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, spoke and shared



Bahati Jacques with Rep. Jim McGovern in Washington, DC.

our concerns and promised action on these issues:

1. Support I-VAWA (International Violence Against Women Act, H.R. 3571) meant to protect, promote and empower women; improve US efficiency of international assistance aimed at addressing issues affecting women internationally.
2. Support the Sudan Peace, Security and Accountability Act or H.R 1692.
3. Indict, apprehend and prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence against women in the DRC and Sudan.
4. Support of the “Mixed Court” tribunal to try crimes against humanity and war crimes as sug-

gested by the UN experts in the Mapping Report published in 2010 and supported by the Congolese civil society.



African Women in Science

By Rita Murphy, AFJN Editorial Consultant

Fighting Grain-Killing Mold

A young woman from Kenya received an international award for innovation in food security. Charity Muetgi, a 38 year old agricultural scientist from Kenya, was the 2013 winner of the Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application.

Muetgi led efforts to develop a biocontrol solution to reduce aflatoxin, a deadly mold that occurs in maize and other grains. The product she developed, called KEO1, is affordable for farmers and environmentally safe.

“Dr. Muetgi is an inspiration to other young scientists around the world,” said Kenneth Quinn, president of the World Food Prize Foundation.



Dr. Charity Muetgi. Photo: www.worldfoodprize.org.

US Foreign Aid: The Power of the Purse to Influence Africa Policy

By Bahati Jacques, AFJN Policy Analyst, and Melaura Homan-Smith, AFJN Program Coordinator

As the saying goes: put your money where your mouth is. The latest appropriations bill, section 7042 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 (US [Public Law No: 113-76](#)) contains important general and country-specific Africa policies. Supporters of foreign aid believe that the aid money allocated for Africa in this year’s US budget is insignificant compared to the need. However, between corporate tax evasion, corruption, and embezzlement, more money leaves the continent than Africa receives in aid; Africa’s central problems are all firmly linked to bad governance. Thus, AFJN is more interested in reforming US aid to Africa with a focus on improving governance.

That said, below are some **Africa policy highlights** from the Consolidated Appropriates Act related to issues AFJN has advocated on:



Cutting funding to the Rwandan Government

With few exceptions, like peacekeeping training, funding for Rwanda will be contingent on whether “the Government of Rwanda is taking steps to cease political, military and/or financial support to armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including M23, that have violated human rights or are involved in the illegal exportation of minerals, wildlife, or other contraband out of the DRC.” This announcement is very good news, and AFJN will encourage the US government to obey this law.

Central African Republic

The law provides funding for reconciliation, peacebuilding, inter-faith dialogue and crimes-against-humanity prevention to address the ongoing rebel violence in CAR.

South Sudan

In an attempt to rescue the world’s youngest nation, which is experiencing widespread violence due to a power struggle, Congress provided funding to “promote stability and reconciliation, prevent and respond to gender-based violence, promote women's leadership, expand educational opportunities especially for girls, strengthen democratic institutions and the

Stopping land grabs in Ethiopia

Land grabs (when Africa’s irresponsible leaders lease large tracts of land to foreign agribusinesses) in Ethiopia have become widespread and devastating to local people who live off their land via subsistence farming. Now the law gives the Secretary of the Treasury the responsibility to “instruct the United States executive director of each international financial institution to oppose financing for any activities that directly or indirectly involve forced evictions in Ethiopia.”

rule of law, and enhance the capacity of the Federal Legislative Assembly to conduct oversight over government processes, revenues, and expenditures.” However, Congress tied 15% of the available funds to transparency and accountability through a government financial audit, which includes oil and gas revenues.

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Military training

This law, under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds peacekeeping training for nations such as Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Somalia, and Zimbabwe, Rwanda. It excludes Equatorial Guinea and Central African Republic. We advocate that all peacekeepers not only be in good standing in terms of human rights, but also be screened for sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

US Counter Terrorism in Africa

This law funds the East Africa Counterterrorism Program which includes nations like Uganda, whose army has not been held accountable for crimes committed in the DRC, including mass rape and murder of innocent civilians. AFJN stands against militarizing Africa, but encourages the US to invest more in conflict prevention, diplomacy, and civil society empowerment.

These politicians get millions of dollars in kickbacks from local and multinational companies, and in return facilitate fraud, waive fines, and excuse tax evasion.

Giving Aid to the Corrupt DRC Government: The Nyandu Report

Apart from the appropriations bill specifics, AFJN urges **no more aid be sent to DRC without institutional reform**. At best, the money is spent on bogus contracts for bureaucrats, at worst it serves to harm and repress citizens.



Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on DRC in March

On March 2, 2014 constituents from California's 11th district (represented by Senators Barbara Boxer, Diane Feinstein, and George Miller) stood up with AFJN to sign a petition urging their representatives in Congress not to send their hard-earned tax dollars to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) unless the DRC government takes steps to deliver on long overdue demands for institutional reform.

The petition asks their representatives to tie funding and other bilateral aid to, for example, the recovery of \$3.7 billion in unpaid taxes, fines and fraud reported in the government's own investigation (The Nyandu Report) in Customs and Excise Agency in Lubumbashi in the mineral-rich Katanga province. \$3.7 billion dollars would be more than a third of DRC's 2014 budget.

A sample letter to send to your members of Congress and the Obama administration is included in the AFJN article titled ["US aid to DR Congo: No more free rides for corrupt government officials!"](#)

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

Staff:

Aniedi Okure, OP

Bahati Jacques

Bazemo Barthelemy

Melaura Homan-Smith

Consultant/Volunteers:

Mike and Rita Murphy

Tom Hannon

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