

Peace Continues to Elude DR Congo

By Bahati Ntama Jacques

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The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been waiting for peace for the past eleven years, but the reality on the ground shows that peace is not in their near future. The Congo has been at war since its invasion in 1996 by the Tutsi and a coalition of Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian armed forces. Even before this, several rebel groups fighting various governments found a safe haven in the Congo where they



Congolese soldiers in North Kivu

wreaked havoc on the nation. These groups include the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu rebel group against the government of Rwanda that accuses them of the genocide of 1994; the National Liberation Forces (FNL), a group that is resisting the government of Burundi; and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group that opposes the government of Uganda. Despite such obvious regional challenges, very little has been done to achieve a lasting peace in the Congo.

We at the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) have been telling the complex Congolese story since the beginning of the conflict, calling on the United States to get involved in the peace process. Nevertheless, nothing significant has been done due to the favorable relationship between the US government and the government of Rwanda. Meanwhile, people are suffering and dying in large numbers everyday.

Recently, we came to know that the pro-Rwanda rebel Laurent Nkundabatware continues to recruit children and adults by force in the areas that he controls, namely Masisi, Bunagana, Runyonyi, Ruvumu, Jomba, just to name a few. In addition, last month, in the village of Kazuba, a mother and her daughter were raped by Nkundabatware's army in the presence of the woman's husband, who was killed trying to fight for his wife and daughter. This particular story was told by the son who was hiding during the attack and heard his mother and sister pleading for their lives. To this day, no one knows what happened to the two women.

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Jeffrey Sachs and

Ishmael Beah

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Everyday, the people of Eastern Congo fear for their lives. People are even attacked while working in their farms. Stories such as these have led to many allegations of atrocities and human rights violations against Nkundabatware's group, but the international community still has not been able to stop him. Instead he enjoys the military support of President Paul Kagame's government in Rwanda and the financial support of Tutsi businessmen and women in Rwanda and abroad.

Why is Nkundabatware exacting such pain on the people of the Congo? It is because he is first a Rwandan and second a Congolese on a mission for Rwanda. He gained his Rwandan citizenship like any other Congolese Tutsi who directly or indirectly fought in Rwanda to take back the power the Tutsi held from the 1300s to 1959. This is part of a long project to reestablish the Tutsi kingdom in the Great Lakes Region, particularly in Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Congo. Nkundabatware also wants to fight the FDLR rebels who are trying to organize themselves to take back the power they lost to the Tutsi in 1994. Officially, he says that his mission is to ensure that the Tutsi from the Congo who currently live in Rwanda can return to a safe environment in the Congo. The Congolese government has accepted Nkundabatware's request to allow these returns. In addition, Nkundabatware and his troops have been invited to join the national army. Yet, making such concessions does not solve the issue related to when, how and why the Tutsi left the Congo to live in Rwanda.



Despite recent attacks, women must continue to procure food for their families.

At present, the Congolese government has exhausted all possible options in negotiating with Nkundabatware. The Congolese President Joseph Kabila, unpopular in the western nations, has no one to speak the truth and pressure, both politically and financially, the Rwandan government to stop its involvement in the Congo. As a result, the likely scenario to get the international community more invested in the Congolese issue is to internationalize the war by calling for military help from Angola and other interested nations. Kabila's father, former President Laurent Kabila, made a similar gesture in 1999 in order to free the Congo from a Rwandan and Ugandan occupation. This collusion of armed forces is also the likely option because the Congolese army is inadequately trained, ill-equipped, underpaid and undisciplined to fight the Rwandan army that is behind Nkundabatware.

President Kabila has nothing to lose in asking for military assistance, but everything to gain because governments like the United States and Great Britain are invested in his removal from office so that they can put in power someone who would protect their interests in the Great Lakes Region.

AFJN is deeply concerned about the escalating violence in Congo and will continue to tell the Congolese story to expose and oppose at all levels the lack of political will to deal effectively with the Congolese neighbors, such as Rwanda and Uganda. The rising number of deaths, rape, child soldiers and other human rights violations occurring in the Congo are unacceptable. Join us at AFJN in calling the US government to act now.

AFJN and Congo Global Action Coalition

Since the end of 2006, AFJN has been actively involved in CGA. Our Executive Director, Rocco Puopolo, s.x., sits on the Coalition's Executive Committee and AFJN acts as CGA's fiscal sponsor. **Together with over thirty international organizations, we have built a coalition to stop the violence in DR Congo.**

As we watched the crises in Darfur and northern Uganda gain worldwide attention, we began to wonder why a war that has seen the deaths of nearly five million individuals has remained absent from the radar of the international community. MONUC, the UN mission in Congo, has proved largely ineffective; the hailed elections of 2006 produced no significant change in the stability of the region; and General Laurent Nkunda, backed by the Rwandan government, has begun a crusade of violence against the people of Eastern DRC.

Unfortunately, the November Conference and Lobby Day needs to be postponed to ensure more effective outcomes. To those of you who have already made plans to attend, we must apologize for this schedule change. Please continue to check the AFJN website as well as the CGA website for updates. Again, our sincere apologies and thank you for your interest in CGA.

In the meantime, **we must act now.** Please visit Congo Global Action's website at www.congoglobalaction.org to find out how you can advocate on a local level before the nationwide conference. **The momentum to establish peace and justice must continue.**

AFJN Adopts Three New Focus Issues

By Beth Tuckey

Each year, the AFJN Staff and Board take some time to consider the major issues arising in the continent of Africa and subsequently choose new focus campaigns. For the past couple of years, AFJN has been devoted almost entirely to raising awareness of the war in northern Uganda. The organization has also tracked the havoc that HIV/AIDS is wreaking on African communities; the challenges posed by Genetically Modified (GM) seeds; the unjust nature of US farm subsidies; and the crises that have been unfolding in places like Zimbabwe, Darfur, Cote d'Ivoire, and the Horn of Africa. Depending on the passions of the current Executive Director and the capabilities of the staff, AFJN must continually reevaluate and shift its foci in order to be the best possible advocate for the peoples of Africa. The staff must also consider where AFJN can take the lead and have a larger influence among the sea of advocates in Washington.

For the remainder of 2007 and through 2008, AFJN will devote its time, energy, and resources to four very important areas of concern: the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), restorative justice, the 2009 African Synod, and the crisis in DR Congo through Congo Global Action Coalition (*see p. 2*). AFRICOM and restorative justice are both issues that necessitate greater US and international attention – AFRICOM for its insidious structure, restorative justice for its lack of Western understanding and support. The African Synod is an opportunity for AFJN to take the lead in bringing African issues to the attention of the United States. In the Eastern region of DRC, the fighting and subsequent suffering of civilians continues unabated and unattended by the international community.

AFRICOM

As previous issues of "Around Africa" have detailed, the central objectives of AFRICOM include counter-terror operations, resource (oil) protection, and humanitarian work. AFJN, with its long member-history on the continent, is troubled by the blending of civil society and armed forces. A soldier who is one day hunting an alleged terrorist in a village and the next day building a school is a confusing figure for Africans – not to mention the example it sets for fragile governments who already overuse the military in their societies. Furthermore, the foreseen involvement of defense contractors such as DynCorp International does not bode well for improved stability or training

among Africa's militaries. AFJN has been working with several other DC-based organizations to devise a strategy for countering the harmful goals of AFRICOM and will be asking for your assistance in amplifying our concerns.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice, or transitional justice, is a means of repairing a community after civil conflict to produce long-term stability. Contrary to the Western form of criminal justice, many African societies have a system that allows a perpetrator to be reintegrated into a community, as long as the grievances of that community are addressed by the perpetrators' apologies, temporary shame, or ceremonial recompense. Of course, it must be recognized that restorative justice often takes place alongside criminal justice, as there are some crimes for which there can be no pardon. But it is vital that the United States support measures of community justice in Africa otherwise the wounds of a torn society may never rightly heal. Again, AFJN has been working with a coalition of other organizations in Washington to introduce a resolution in the House and to raise awareness for this issue in Congress.

"The Staff and Board believe that these are important, timely, and relevant issues that will further AFJN's mission to promote peace and justice on the continent of Africa."

African Synod

Shortly after the African Synod of 1994, AFJN published a book detailing the process and the outcomes of the Synod. The next Synod will be in October of 2009 and AFJN, along with the Catholic Task Force on Africa, will work to invite the United States Church to be in solidarity for this ecclesial event. The theme of the Second Special Assembly for Africa is "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace." AFJN is developing partnerships with dioceses, Justice and Peace Offices, and Bishops in Africa who have begun reflecting on the *lineamenta*, or the 'working paper,' in light of this Assembly. AFJN hopes to be attendance in Rome in 2009 and we invite you to share your reflections with us on this important event.

Thus, it is on these three issues, along with Congo Global Action Coalition that AFJN will focus its energy. Restora-
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Resource Exploitation and Corporate Recklessness in Nigeria: Navigating a Way for Justice in the Niger Delta

By Joseph Effiong

The deposit of natural resources in any area by God is a design to provide for the needs of the people living on the land. But the people of Niger Delta have not been lucky enough to derive such benefits from the resources found in their land. Who are the people benefiting from the resources and why are they extracted at the detriment of the host communities? The answers to these questions are what AFJN works to answer in fulfillment of its commitment to issues of peace and justice in the troubled regions of Africa.

“The number of species destroyed cannot be determined, but the impact on the health of humans and animals living in the Delta area is devastating.”

Nigeria is a country endowed with abundant natural resources including oil, but is among the 30 poorest countries in the world with 60% of the population living below the poverty line, according to the UNDP Human Development Index 2006. The oil wells are found in the Niger Delta region with many of them located offshore. At the time the oil industry was being developed, environmental protection and impacts on the host communities were not given full consideration.

Moreover, Nigeria being a former colony of Britain gave concessions to Shell BP without a complete evaluation of the long-term consequences of oil extraction on the environment. Furthermore, there are inadequate legal frameworks to handle the environmental problems created by oil exploitation. Such lack of domestic structures to deal with legislative and policy issues is of great concern in the oil industry. Also, most of the local laws and decrees that are enacted are not in accordance with international agreements.

Nigeria is the world's eighth-largest oil exporter, with significant oil and gas reserves and a daily output of 2.6 million barrels. In 2006, Shell Development Company of Nigeria paid \$3.5 billion in taxes and royalties to the Nigerian government in addition to the \$75 million paid to the Niger Delta Development Commission for community development, and another \$53 million spent on the com-

pany's community development program, according to their annual report. Significantly, Shell made a total profit of US\$22.94bn in 2006. Nigeria currently supplies 10 percent of Shell's global output – in other words, an average of \$ 2.294bn in profit from Nigeria alone.

Oil pollution in Nigeria is enormous and controversial because the oil companies are not prepared to internalize the negative externalities, even though its impact on the health of the people of oil producing communities is recognized. In most cases, oil companies attribute oil spillage to sabotage or accident. According to research conducted by the

Nigerian Environmental Society in 1985, offshore and onshore oil spillage amounts to 1,711,354 barrels between 1970 and 1983. In 2006 alone, Shell recorded a total of 241 oil spills in its operation in Nigeria; this figure may not

include minor spillage which is less than 25 barrels in inland water and those in their operational areas.

The number of species destroyed cannot be determined, but the impact on the health of humans and animals living in the Delta area is devastating. According to a report compiled in 2006 by independent experts from the World Wildlife Foundation UK, the World Conservation Union and the Nigeria Conservation Foundation, the Delta was identified as one of the five most polluted spots in the world. The report highlighted the destructive impacts on rare species including primates, fish, turtles and birds, and noted that pollution is destroying the livelihoods of many of the 20 million people living there, damaging crops and fuelling an upsurge in violence. Finally, it concluded that corruption and mismanagement further deprive the Niger Delta people of the benefits of the region's resources.

There is an urgent need for the Nigerian state to live up to its responsibility of protecting its citizens against the unwholesome practices and policies of transnational corporations by promulgating legislations and policies that will give the oil-producing communities greater control and management of the resources found in their area. In order to provide a platform for effective development planning, there is also the need to combine environmental considerations with the socio-political and economic perspectives in the development framework.

Global Climate Change, Global Effort

By Bahati Ntama Jacques

From September 5-7, 2007, the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) held its annual conference for Non Government Organizations on the theme, "Global climate change, how it impacts us all?" Utilizing AFJN's UN-DPI status, Executive Director Rocco Pupolo and Staff Member Bahati Jacques and members Sr. Maura Browne and Fr. Luigi Zanotto attended the conference to find out what AFJN may need to know in order to inform our advocacy on this issue.

Africa and Global Climate Change

This year, heavy rain and flooding have been reported in 17 nations in Africa. Ghana and Uganda were the worst cases, though the detriment to countries like Chad who are already suffering from food shortages is important to note. Unfortunately, no African nation is well-prepared to cope with natural disasters. Even if African countries were prepared, how good is good enough to deal with current and future natural disasters? They have no structures to deal with the results of global climate change, and no funds to improve or maintain what they have in place. Prior to addressing climate change, Africa must recover from the immense challenges of war, HIV/AIDS, political instability,



The result of dry policies in Washington. *Photo from CRS.*

and neo-colonialism. African nations seek sustained development (and rightfully so) with little heed to the environmental impacts of such industrialization. Unfortunately, African forests, a true asset in regulating the global climate, are being exploited in very irresponsible ways. The Congo River Basin forest, the second largest in the world after the Amazon which spreads across the DR Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea, is estimated to be losing 1.5 million hectares of forest each year due to destructive and careless logging. At this rate, "two-thirds of the Congo Basin forest could be lost within 50 years," says Constance Hegner, communication Officer of WWF-Denmark in her article "Congo Forest Company Goes 'Green.'"

At this conference, the link between human activity and global climate change was emphasized by scientists who indicated that an increase in the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere leads to an increase in the effects of climate change. Africa only emits 4% of the carbon but is adversely effected by the emissions of the rest of the world as well as the destruction of her forests.

Global Climate Change and Indigenous peoples

Global climate change: Who created the problem? Have we not been doing our part? The consequences of climate change on indigenous people revives their painful experiences of oppression by both foreign and local powers. Once again, the poor are victims because they do not have the necessary structures to deal with the consequences of climate change. Indigenous contribution to the debate on climate change is not only scientific, economic and political, but also spiritual. They believe that we must live in harmony and unity with nature, something they have been doing for centuries and continue to do today. A change of heart, behavior, and a purposeful commitment to love our planet earth may help us achieve this harmonious life.

Act Now on Global Climate Change

Poor nations are asking industrialized nations to repair the damage they have done to the Earth by their activities. Meanwhile, these nations lack the will to give up the economic and material benefits that come with a high level of development and industrialization. Despite knowing that people are dying and that human civilizations are threatened by extinction as a result of global climate change, some nations argue that they are waiting for adequate technology to reduce carbon emission. Those who find this issue urgent, call for international solidarity as well as individual responsibility for the harmful effects of such a large environmental footprint. The cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of acting now. To be environmentally friendly in our activities, a lot of rethinking has to be done at the level of national and international policies, economies and spirituality. Individuals must also begin to think of the human community as a family whose common home needs greater respect and care. While we do still live in a world where oppression, exploitation and selfishness dominate many of our cross-cultural interactions and international relations, if we do not act now, the world will suffer serious consequences. To a global climate change crisis, AFJN calls for a global climate change solution. For the sake of our partners in Africa who are already confronted with the challenges that accompany poverty, it is imperative that we continue to advocate for just relations between our nation and theirs.

Young People and AFJN

Where do we go to meet and invite younger folks to be part of the Africa Faith and Justice Network? Here in the USA we have approached university students over the past two years to engage them in advocacy for Northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Last year's Northern Uganda Lobby Days attracted over 700 young people to come to DC and make their voices heard on the Hill. Three college campuses are now affiliated in some way with AFJN: Notre Dame and St. Mary's University in Notre Dame, IN and Loyola University of Chicago, IL. Significant contacts have been extended to 4 other campuses: University of Illinois, Chicago; Dayton University in Dayton, Ohio, Xavier University of Cincinnati, Ohio and American University here in DC.

But I keep hearing that little voice we all have inside saying, "Go to the source!" And our source is Africa and this past summer I was able to attend and present at the Pan African International Young Christian Student (YCS) Movement Council held in Kampala, Uganda in late July. It took place just before the IYCS World Council also in Kampala. The YCS movement was started by Fr. Joseph Cardijn in the late 1920's as a way to engage students in Catholic Social Action as well as to be in solidarity with one another. The international movement, begun after World War II, is now 60 years old. Many of us who work in Africa know the YCS movement and it is alive and well in over 82 countries worldwide.

At the Pan African Council I met 50 enthusiastic, committed and faith-filled YCSers from 19 African countries. Their themes for this council were poverty eradication,

peace building, capacity and skills building for accountability, education, climate change and HIV/AIDS education. Because so many of these issues fit with much of what we advocate for at AFJN, they immediately wanted to be a part of it. One of my purposes for this Africa trip was to connect with various East Africa Justice and Peace centers that are either part of diocesan structures or ministries of the many religious communities present in the region. I discovered that many former YCSers serve in these Justice and Peace offices because YCS forms their members to do the research, articulate the analysis of the situation and move to action. At the council meeting I heard reports from various African countries, relating both to the challenges they face as students as well as the actions they take to engage in justice work. Much is done with little means. Their faith informs their experience and they make justice happen in both big and small ways. I invited them to keep in contact with us and to share future reports so that we can use their efforts to strengthen our advocacy for Africa.



IYCS at the Uganda Martyrs Shrine in August

I have invited the newly elected IYCS General Secretary, Mr. Koffi Eduardo Koutsava of Togo, and two members of the Pan Africa YCS Team, Ms. Mary Wambui of Kenya and Fr. Pius Rutechura, the Pan African Chaplain as well as General Secretary of AMECEA to join us at the 25th Anniversary Celebrations and Conference. Their presence will be a treat for all those coming. Catch the enthusiasm and grace they have as we together advocate for Peace and Justice in Africa.

Fr. Rocco Puopolo, s.x., *Executive Director*

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-tive justice is a long-term point of advocacy while AFRICOM and the African Synod each have a direct timeframe and will require strategic efforts to ensure AFJN's effectiveness. All told, the Staff and Board believe that these are important, timely, and relevant issues that will further AFJN's mission to promote peace and justice on the continent of Africa.

However, we cannot do this work alone. We need your energy and support or our goals are not likely to be met. As always, the best way to receive updates on how you

can take action is to sign up for our eNetwork on the AFJN website (www.afjn.org), if you have not done so already. Also, please feel free to communicate with us, to make a donation to further our work, and to tell your Senators and Representatives in Congress what they can do to promote more responsible US-Africa policy. The members of Congress are your employees – help us hold them accountable for the laws they make.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to working with you as we continue to advocate for a shift in US policy and mentality toward Africa.

AFJN Welcomes a New Staff Member and Fall Interns

Bahati Ntama Jacques joins AFJN as a policy analyst. He is originally from Goma in the North Kivu province of the DR Congo. From 1996-2000 he witnessed the invasion of the DRC by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda and worked in the field of post-war relief. He is the co-founder of Association des vieillards Abandonnes (AVA) that addressed the increased number of elderly on the streets of Bukavu during the long war in DRC. He holds an undergraduate degree in Philosophy from La Ruzzi in Bukavu/DRC, and a Masters of Divinity and Masters of Arts in Ethics from Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. Bahati has a wide experience in pastoral ministry with youth in parishes and in jail in Chicago. He has also just finished four units of clinical pastoral education at Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn, Illinois and is recently married to Felicia Wells. For more than a year, Bahati has been working as an intern with Africa Faith and Justice Network. His passion for social justice informs his work at AFJN as well his personal contribution to make this world a better place for all.

Joseph Effiong, a Ford Foundation Fellow from Nigeria, is a graduate student in Sustainable Development at the School for International Training (SIT) in Brattleboro, Vermont. Before joining SIT in 2006, Joseph worked as the Director of a local nonprofit in Nigeria which focuses on Sustainable Agriculture and Education Capacity Building Programs. His internship with AFJN is part of SIT's graduate requirements and he is hoping to use this opportunity to learn how advocacy campaigns are planned, managed and implemented in a global context. The challenges of coming from a region plagued by oil pollution and underdevelopment has motivated him to acquire skills in the advocacy and agenda setting process that will ensure effective civil society engagement with government for social change.

Barbie Fischer is in her senior year at Great Lakes Christian College based in Lansing, Michigan. She is completing her Bachelors Degree in Cross-Cultural Ministries during her internship this fall. Barbie first became interested in Africa in high school, after viewing a television special focused on children in Uganda. With her interest in religion and politics she found a desire to learn how AFJN, being a faith based organization, functions in U.S. policy making. Barbie has experience working in the medical field, which has made her a prime candidate to focus on the HIV/AIDS

epidemic during her time with AFJN. Barbie hopes to find a career focused on changing U.S. policies or with an African organization in the field.

Mary Hansen is an American University sophomore studying International Service with a focus in International Development and Economics. Originally from the suburbs of Pittsburgh, she enjoys exploring the culturally diverse Washington, DC, area. Although she is focusing her studies on the Latin American region, Mary has always had an interest in Africa after hearing stories about her parents' missionary work in Tanzania. At AFJN, she will be researching Child Soldiers and AFRICOM.

Alexis Nadin is a sophomore at American University where she is studying International Relations and Political Science. Alexis has a passion for Africa and a sincere desire to learn about the continent—the cultures, struggles, and hopes. She hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania but has always longed to live in DC. Since her arrival here she has had quite a few eye opening experiences and has jumped at the opportunity to learn from them. This semester, she will be spending a majority of her time at the office of Congo Global Action which has taken on the immense task of putting together a national advocacy conference.

President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief Update

From Barbie Fischer

The President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is up for reauthorization this year. As such, the House and Senate have been working on their respective Bills throughout the summer. The House is currently in committee, discussing revisions that they can all agree on. Once they reach an acceptable document and are able to pass the Bill, they will meet with the Senate (who passed their Bill in September) and begin collaborations on a document to present to the President.

Many are optimistic regarding the recent developments with PEPFAR. As it stands now, the Senate has approved increased funding for the fight against HIV/AIDS, along with an allowance for current and future presidents to waive the abstinence spending requirements, presently a part of PEPFAR.

While there is some great forward movement in the fight against HIV/AIDS, there is still work to be done. Currently, AFJN and a team of faith based organizations are working on drafting a document to present to Congress regarding what we would like to see accomplished in the PEPFAR reauthorization. The document will call for an increase in funding for orphans and vulnerable children and for health care workers, among other things. We at AFJN will continue to keep a close eye on PEPFAR to be sure it reflects just policy and procedure toward those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

We hope you will join us for our 25th Anniversary Celebration, April 18-21, 2008 in Rosslyn, Virginia!
 Keep an eye on the AFJN website for upcoming registration information.
 For specific inquiries, email conference@afjn.org

The 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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