

A R O U N D Africa

Septem-



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AFRICA? Who cares?

By Bill Dyer, M.Afr.

You do! Yes, you care about Africa or you wouldn't have received or picked up this issue of **Around Africa** and you wouldn't be reading it right now! Yes, you care about Africa, and the good news is that you're not alone. When the G-8 met at the Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire, Scotland, last July, their main focus was Africa. Months before that Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, had devoted considerable attention to Africa in his speeches and programs. Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, made a grassroots tour of a number of countries in Africa. Even America's own George W. Bush has visited several countries in Africa and launched an apparently generous aid program for treatment of people with AIDS. Notice that I didn't say you were in good company; I simply stated that you were not alone in being interested in Africa!



That interest in Africa is evident not only among prominent political figures but right across the board of contemporary American society. Globalization is not just a fuzzy notion or an example of politically correct terminology, it is a lived reality. What happens in the U.S. has an impact on Africa and what happens in Africa touches us over here in the States. Just look at the inroads African musicians and singers are making on the American scene. Go to one of the mega-

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Katrina Response Should Be Matched in Africa

By Michael Poffenberger

As Hurricane Katrina's fury was unleashed upon southeastern United States, the consciousness of people in America and around the world was penetrated by shocking news images of poor, black families stranded by the disaster and left vulnerable to its worst effects. The resulting flurry of conversations and activity ensures that the images will be dignified by some response, limited as it may be. But before Katrina was ever imagined and long after the hurricane's political fallout is forgotten, humanitarian crises on an even greater scale raged and will continue raging through Africa, hidden from the eyes, ears, and consciousness of people everywhere.

Several emergencies currently dominate the African landscape. In Sudan's western region of Darfur, more than a year after Congress and the Bush Administration declared the violence to be genocide, there is no improvement in the security situation. Janjaweed marauders continue to inflict unending trauma upon the local population. African Union troops deployed in the region are embarrassingly inadequate to protect civilians, and peace talks are floundering. Meanwhile, as the death toll in Darfur tops half a million, the Bush Administration fears confrontation with the Sudanese government due to Sudan's support for the War on Terror.

Moreover, as the violence in Darfur becomes protracted, media networks tire of covering it. A recent study released by the Center for American Progress and the Genocide Intervention Fund reported that during June 2005, the five major American news outlets ran 50 times as many stories about Michael Jackson and twelve times as many stories about Tom Cruise as they did about the genocide. Media coverage has a profound effect on international crisis response, as the reaction to Asia's recent tsunami—and indeed, Hurricane Katrina—demonstrate.

A similarly weak international response to famine in Niger has left millions of people to face starvation. The famine received tardy global attention only as

news broadcasts around the world in June and July portrayed emaciated children dying as the world looked on. UN humanitarian appeals to rich countries have yielded minimal returns. As Hurricane Katrina eclipsed all news of Niger, the UN had collected only half of its request for \$81 million for emergency assistance. Compared to the more than \$100 billion expected cost for reconstruction after the hurricane, saving the lives of millions in Niger would cost little. Another famine looms on the horizon for Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and early donor appeals have yielded equally little.

Although the global response to Katrina's devastation is a testament to the potential for human generosity and solidarity—over 90 countries donated to relief efforts, including many developing nations—that same spirit has not been harnessed in solidarity with



Human Rights Watch Photo 2004

Tragedies continue in Darfur, but few respond.


those who need it most. The value of human life should not be tied to notions of power and wealth. How would the world respond to famine, violence, or genocide in the United States? To pursue a society built on the common good, it is the needs of the most vulnerable we must turn to meet first, and Africa is a great place to start. 



Photo by Bruno Stevens Human Rights Watch

By Peter Quaranto

As the sun sets tonight in northern Uganda, thousands of children march along dusty roads, traveling from their rural villages to sleep on the streets of towns that promise relative safety. These children, as young as two or three, walk miles nightly to avoid abduction by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the rebel group that has waged war against the Government of Uganda and the people of the north for two decades. Yet, these child "night commuters" are the lucky ones; more than 30,000 of their brothers and sisters have been kidnapped by the LRA, forced into soldiering and sexual slavery.

The situation in northern Uganda is truly a scene from hell: boys forced to hack off lips and ears of innocent civilians, girls raped by rebel commanders

and a government that has failed its responsibility to protect its civilians. Worst of all, the crisis has remained off the radar of the international community, remaining neglected for two decades.

After talking to people in northern Uganda, we saw the opportunity to launch a campaign calling on international actors – governmental and non-governmental – to make peace in northern Uganda a priority. We launched this campaign, the Uganda Conflict Action Network, with just a list of phone numbers, a rough Web site and a few committed individuals. In four months, a lot has changed, not least that we are now a campaign of AFJN. But our commitment to peace remains resolute.

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A BOLD VISION FOR PEACE IN DARFUR



By Patrick Corrigan

On July 30, the helicopter carrying John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) crashed in southern Sudan. The death of the rebel leader sent shock waves throughout the entire region and the international community.

Using the resulting instability to deflect attention, the Government of Sudan in Khartoum and the Bush Administration are trying to convince people that the situation in Darfur is improving and requires little international scrutiny. The realities on the ground could not be further from the truth. Darfur continues to deteriorate while words from leaders are not matched with action.

Recent reports from the region confirm the continuing horror. Greg Elder of Catholic Relief Services reported from his trip in July that "...in Darfur, security is each individual's own responsibility. Almost every adult male is armed. At any time, day or night, you might be a target for kidnapping, robbery or even

murder."

Currently, the three most important issues to be dealt with are appropriate provision of aid, stopping the widespread rape, and deploying forces for adequate civilian protection.

The United Nations recently reported that 3.5 million Darfurians are in need of emergency food and medical supplies. Rebel groups attacking humanitarian convoys make the task of delivering aid to this many people challenging, but the consequences of failing such a task are disastrous.

Rape is still reported on a widespread basis. The climate of impunity has taken an especially strong toll on women.

Civilian protection is severely lacking. The African Union has deployed several thousand troops to the region, but experts estimate that between 12,000 and 40,000 are needed to patrol the region adequately. There is no protection for civilians from rebels and bandits attacking their homes in search of food and resources.

As people of faith concerned with this unnecessary suffering in Darfur, we must respond to our government's apathetic inaction with a bold vision for peace. There are many practical steps that we can urge our policymakers to take, but most importantly we must show our categorical rejection of the degradation of people in Darfur. We must assert our belief that peace is possible and we will do everything in our power to create safe and just living conditions in the region.

Supporting the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act in the Senate and the House is a good place to start. Among other things, it encourages a rapid expansion

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BOLD VISION (Continued from page 4)

of the size and mandate for the African Union peace-keeping force in Darfur and recognizes the implications of peace in Darfur on the surrounding regions of southern Sudan and northern Uganda.

The recent appointment of Roger Winter as State Department Special Envoy to Sudan is encouraging. But Winter's mandate is to focus on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between North and South Sudan. Such a focus not only detracts from efforts to end the genocide in Dar

BOLD VISION (Continued from page 5)

YOU have the power to protect!

Please call President Bush and your Congresspeople to voice support for the **Darfur Peace and Accountability Act**, Senate Resolution 1462 and House Resolution 3127.

The Act, if passed, encourages the expansion of African Union troops in Darfur and supports increased targeted sanctions against the Government of Sudan.

Call your representatives today!

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AFJN happenings in brief...

Offices Moved:

The AFJN offices were moved from St. Paul's College to Trinity University on 8/10/05. We're in Offices 481 and 482 in the main building, but we've kept the same mailing address as before.

Visits to AFJN Offices:

Isaias Mabiala, of the **Front for the Liberation of Cabinda**. He explained the purpose of his organization, gave us some historical background and an update on the current situation. Isaias can be contacted at sawq_99@yahoo.com. **Felicity Harrison**, of the **Catholic Parliamentary Office** of the Justice and Peace Commission of the South African Bishops' Conference. Her work focuses on human rights, refugees and arms. **Sameer Dossani** and **Susan Thompson** of **50 Years is Enough**. They have been important partners for AFJN in the struggle for global economic justice in the past and will certainly continue to be so. **Arthur Serota**, of **United Movement to End Child Soldiering**, is working with AFJN to advocate for a just peace in northern Uganda. **Fr. Michael Perry**, OFM, previously of the **Africa Desk at USCCB** and currently at **Franciscans International** visited to discuss new beginnings for AFJN and possibilities for Uganda. **Twelve Notre Dame college students** came to town to discuss the future

of **Uganda-CAN**, AFJN's new campaign for peace in Uganda. AFJN thanks all the volunteers for peace in Uganda, especially Peter Quaranto, director of the campaign!

Activities:

Participation in Catholic Task Force on Africa, and **Advocacy Network on Africa**, the latter of which will be co-chaired by Bill Dyer, AFJN's executive director. **Exhibits** at the annual conferences of the Major Superiors of Men and the Major Superiors of Women. **Assisted in drafting an NGO sign-on letter** for a "comprehensive approach to building peace in Sudan and northern Uganda," submitted to President Bush, State Department officials, and Members of Congress with approximately 30 other signing organizations. **Attendance at a Senate Briefing** on the comprehensive approach to Sudan and Uganda. **Attendance at a conference** at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Salim Ahamed Salim spoke about the Africa Union. **Participation in Day for Darfur**, a demonstration organized by **Africa Action** and its many partners. **Meetings with Oxfam, World Vision, Refugees International** and other advocacy officers regarding a policy agenda for northern Uganda.

fur, but also plays into Khartoum's strategy to draw attention to one situation so as to destabilize another. Only a comprehensive approach to dealing with all of Sudan's insurgencies will ultimately be effective.

The stakes are high. It is not only the humanity of the people in Darfur that depend upon our response; it is also our own.

Patrick Corrigan is a junior at Notre Dame and national leader for raising awareness about Darfur.

Ending the Nightmare (Continued from page 3)

In July, our first legislative breakthrough was a meeting with Senator Sam Brownback's office, which has been a rare leader on promoting this issue. Working with Senator Brownback's staff and others, we helped put together an amendment to a foreign operations appropriations bill that would provide funds for peace mediation and negotiations in northern Uganda. We are still waiting anxiously to see if this will pass through Congress.

Meeting with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) over the summer, we also helped draft and push a letter to the U.S. government calling for a more comprehensive regional approach to the conflicts in Darfur, northern Uganda and southern Sudan. On September 13, the Senate held briefings on exploring such an approach. We hope and will work that these briefings are a catalyst for fresh U.S. policy that supports mediation, peace processes and civilian protection.

While supporting the legislative work of larger NGOs, we have also been working with others to organize grassroots actions to press for international attention and action for peace. Building on the innovative idea of two individuals from Toronto, we are part of a campaign for Global GuluWalk Day on October 22, when people in over thirty cities around the world will walk to tell the stories of the child "night commuters."

The walks will be an opportunity for all of us to speak out for the international community to end its forget and neglect of these children.

At Africa Faith and Justice Network, we are working to push for a more humane and just U.S. policy towards Africa. Through our efforts to promote peace in northern Uganda, we are doing that work, and we need your help to make our efforts a real contribution for the children living through this nightmare. Visit www.UgandaCAN.org to learn more about the war and our work, and to get involved. Together, we will continue to seek new and creative ways to act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Africa for a more hopeful tomorrow.

Peter Quaranto founded the Uganda-CAN campaign, which AFJN now hosts and supports. Peter is a senior at Notre Dame.



Photo by Bruno Stevens Human Rights Watch

AFJN Annual Conference October 16-17, 2005

Weaving a Response to AIDS in Africa

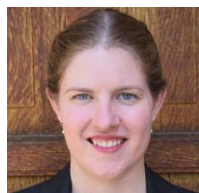
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**South African
Bishop Kevin
Dowling, CSsR**
will present



**HIV/AIDS:
A Faith and Justice Response to the Pandemic**



Marie Clark-Brill of Africa Action
will present

**Debt Cancellation:
A Necessary Response to the AIDS Pandemic**



Registration and Accommodations

Name _____

Organization affiliation _____

Address _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Nonrefundable conference fee:
\$100 before September 15, 2005
\$125 by October 5, 2005

Make check payable to:
Africa Faith and Justice Network

Send completed registration form and
conference fee by October 5, 2005, to:

Africa Faith and Justice Network
3035 Fourth Street N.E.
Washington, DC 20017

Please make your reservations at:
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Tucson, AZ 85701
Phone: 1-520-624-8711

**Ask for the Mission Congress
special conference rate:**
\$89 for one to two occupants
\$99 for three to four occupants

Africa Faith and Justice Network is a Catholic network of individual and group members focused on Africa and the experience of its people. AFJN is committed in faith to collaborate in the task of transforming United States mentality and policy on Africa. It seeks to be an instrument of education and advocacy on behalf of justice for Africa.

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AFRICA? WHO CARES? (Continued from page 1)

bookstores or get on line. You'll see a plethora of books on Africa and its history, culture and current events. More and more of us are getting around to Africa and more and more of Africa is getting around to us.

At Africa Faith and Justice Network we can only rejoice in this. AFJN is not and was never meant to be an office-centered advocacy organization, permitting its members to offer financial support while letting the staff take care of the real commitment to, and advocacy for, justice and peace in Africa. That's why we have these newsletters. That's why we have recently invited you to sign on in support of the people of Darfur, Sudan and the people of northern Uganda. That's why we've asked you to join others in stating openly your opposition to torture. Those are some practical ways of networking with others to foster justice and peace in Africa, by trying to have some impact on the policies of the government of the United States. We get together to speak out and take action, because we have faith (Africa **FAITH** and Justice Network); we believe in the One who is Justice, the One who is Peace!



2004 EPA Photo—Human Rights Watch

We're glad you've picked up this newsletter and begun to read it. Finish it and then ask yourself what you're willing to do with us and others, as we walk with the peoples of Africa, in the hope that, with them, we can contribute to weaving justice and peace into the very fabric of their lives and the lives of their countries.

We'll be calling on you to do your part and to help us do ours. So get ready for the action!

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