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MISSION STATEMENT

The Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN), inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, seeks to educate and advocate for just relations with Africa and to work in partnership with African peoples as they engage in the struggles for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Moved to action by their personal experiences in Africa, three Catholic missionary congregations, namely the Missionaries of Africa, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Spiritains), and the Society of African Missions, founded the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) in 1983 to transform United States policy towards Africa and her people. Since that time, membership has grown and remains committed in faith to advocate in Washington, DC, for U.S. relations with Africa that foster justice and peace, and to educate the public across the United States on the truth about Africa.

Highlights of 2015

Major Activities and Accomplishments

AFJN spearheads an impressive coalition to stop land grabbing in Africa

The Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN) initiated a coalition to protect Africa's farm lands from Land Grabbing and restore land rights to indigenous communities. The launching took place at the **Continental Conference on Land Grab and Just Governance in Africa** held in Limuru, Kenya from November 22-26, 2015. The conference brought together 164 participants from 113 organizations across Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and South America to build a coalition to tackle the threat posed by land grabbing in Africa. Most of the attendees came from sub-Saharan Africa, representing 45 countries. Providentially, Pope Francis was in Kenya at the time of the conference and made several references to the land grab and dislocation of people as an injustice that needs to be corrected.



Funding for Limuru Conference 2015 and Follow up Workshops 2016 was provided by the following:

Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities, Catholic Relief Services, Cushman Foundation, and CIDSE member organizations, the Adorers of the Precious Blood, The Missionaries of Africa and the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and an anonymous individual.

Keynote Address by Prof. Sister Teresa Okure



Holy Child Sister Teresa Okure delivered the keynote address on Biblical perspective on land, with Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si* on the care of the environment, our common home as background. The conference also discussed ways to achieve food security, peace, sovereignty, economic independence and development by examining several cases of land grabbing which occurred across Africa and the role of local political elites in facilitating this process.

What is at stake?

More than 50 % of total land grabbing worldwide occurs in Africa. As of June 2012 about 227 million of Hectares (876,000 square miles) of land – the equivalent land area of California, Oregon, Washington, and the eastern US States stretching from Maine to Florida, plus Wisconsin, Illinois, West Virginia and the District of Columbia – has been grabbed from developing countries through shady deals that dispossess the people of their land, their livelihood and their identity and drive them further into poverty.



Land Grab in Mundemba South West Cameroun

Major Sponsors of Limuru Conference 2015



Continental Conference on Land Grab And Just Governance In Africa

The major sponsors of the conference along with AFJN are SECAM (Symposium of the Episcopal Conference of Africa and Madagascar), AEFJN (Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network) and CIDSE (Catholic Coalition for International Development and Solidarity) and AMECEA (Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa) as the local host.

Held at Jumuia Conference & Country Home Limuru - Kenya, 22nd - 26th Nov. 2015

Looking Forward: The Conference Outcome

The coalition's commitment includes:

- Advocacy for national legislation aimed at preventing and stopping land grabs.
- Campaign for a moratorium on further land deals in Africa until governments enact laws to protect the vulnerable and the environment, counteracting from international voluntary guidelines that facilitate land grabbing.
- Denounce the criminalization of land rights activists and support activists imprisoned until they are freed.
- Educate local communities about land grabbing, sustainable use of land, and the preservation of the integrity of our ecosystems.
- Promote responsible investments in Africa's agricultural sector
- Expose the endemic corruption which keeps people poor and vulnerable to land grabbing.

Action Plan 2016: Conference Follow Up

- AFJN will continue building coalitions at local levels across the continent. Plans are already underway for follow up awareness and prevention programs against land grabbing in *Tanzania, Nigeria and Uganda*.
- Collaborating with the National Catholic Secretariat and the Centre for Indigenous Knowledge on Development (CIKOD), AFJN is already working on a national conference in *Ghana* to promote awareness and prevention of land grabbing. The awareness strategy includes information sharing using the platform of 20 Catholic FM radio stations.
- Nigeria's delegation to work with those from *Mozambique and Kenya* to ensure that land deals by the US based agribusiness Dominion Farms is just and respectful of the rights of local communities where the land is taken.
- The Catholic University of East Africa plans to hold a conference on Land Grab in February 2016

Land Grab Awareness and Prevention Campaign in Volta Region Ghana

Awareness and Prevention Conference for Paramount Female Chiefs

AFJN conducted a very successful conference in Ho, the capital of Ghana's Volta Region, which brought together about 100 members of the Volta Region Paramount Female Chiefs - Queen Mothers Association.



Conference in Ho: Volta Region Paramount Queen Mothers Association

Mama Alori II, queen

mother from Dorfor traditional area, reported to AFJN that her clan and three others withdrew their names from a memorandum of understanding in an ongoing land acquisition by foreign corporations in the area. They have agreed to hold out until they are clear that the land deal will benefit them now and for generations to come. We celebrate this victory with all the members of the four clans, an estimated total number of 28,000 people.

Town Hall Meeting in Pusupu



Paramount Chief Tidibo Kowura Odamba II addressing the village

In Pusupu about 125 men and women attended the town hall meeting along with their children. The community made a strong commitment not to lease their land to anyone, unless it will benefit them. A Malaysian company is still trying to get the community to lease their land at a great disadvantage to the community. In 2000 Pusupu had 4547 inhabitants.

Obviously 15 years later the total number of people at risk is much higher.

Town Hall Meeting in Bontibo

At another gathering in the neighboring town of Bontibo, about 75 adults and their children attended the session. The town, which according to year 2000 census had 3781 residents, is also being solicited by the same Malaysian company for similar land lease.



Impact of Herakles Farms Land Grab on Local Communities



AFJN staff Jacques Bahati interviewing leaders in Tamale Village

The meeting with community leaders in Tamale revealed that families – land owners were paid less than \$400 by Herakles Farms to move a different place with promise of a better future. Instead, they are left worse off than they were prior to losing their land. They continue to suffer from that grave injustice. Herakles Farms, a US based agribusiness which made the deal did not keep its promise and

went on to sell the acquired land to a British company, Volta Red. AFJN continues to advocate for a proper compensation scheme.

Under the leadership of Paramount Chief Tidibo Kowura Odamba II, members of AFJN's Volunteer Task Force on Land Grab Prevention in Ghana spoke at the Queen Mothers' Conference in Ho and at town hall meetings in Pusupu and Bontibo. AFJN staff continues to empower the task force, training them to enhance their own effective-

AFJN's Ghana Volunteer Task Force on Land Grab



Left to right: Mr. Jonas Kofibi, Chief Okyeame Ben Atomey, Name not recalled, Chief Tidibo Odamba II, Chief Dawohonso Mireku I, Bahati Jacques (USA office) Mr. George Sarku-Darke . Picture taken at the Town hall meeting in Pusupu

ness as the real boots on the ground. The task force team gave a presentation at the Avatime Rice festival in November. The festival brought together many sub-chiefs and members of a large chiefdom. The team received very positive responses when it held an awareness meeting for the staff of Truboman Senior High School in Brewaniase.

Highlights of Staff Engagement & Advocacy



AFJN's Collaboration with



Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network

The two sister organizations collaborated extensively for the Continental Conference on Land Grab, successfully building a groundbreaking coalition. The collaboration grew stronger through regular staff meetings (Washington and Brussels) over Skype and continuous updates.

Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald delivered a lecture on the “Grounds for dialogue with Islam today”

On Friday, March 6, 2015, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald gave a lecture sponsored by AFJN and the Institute for Policy Research (IPR) at Catholic University. He advocated for an open and conscious dialogue with Islam, emphasizing the need to make a difference between those committing atrocities in the name of Islam and those who genuinely strive to honor their faith commitment according to Islam. Archbishop Fitzgerald called us to address the reciprocal ignorance that persists in faith communities. The lecture drew participants from the media, the diplomatic community, the Muslim community and advocacy network in the Washington, DC area. The talk was later published in several news outlets including *The National Catholic Reporter* and *Origins*.



Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr

Addressing the Threat of Islamic Terrorism



AFJN Staff worked with the White House as well as international and local religious leaders, reflecting on how to deal with terrorism perpetuated in the name of Islam. Terrorism is a pressing issue, particularly in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and the United States.

Picture from left: Fr. Okure, Reverend Nicolas Guérékoyame Gbangou, Imam Omar Kabine Layama, CAR's religious leaders Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, and Fr. Barthelemy Bazemo at the White House round table discussion about Central African Republic's Muslim-Christian conflict.

Presidential Term Limit in Burundi

Under AFJN

leadership, the Catholic Task Force on Africa (CTFA) sent letters to the Obama Administration in April with policy recommendations to help end the presidential term limit crisis in Burundi. The US has been seeking solutions to the crisis which escalated after President Pierre Nkurunziza forcefully remained in power. We delivered letters and met with the staff of the Senate

Budget Committee to make the case against cutting funding for Voice of America's Kinyarwanda-Kirundi radio program.



Jacques Bahati, Congresswoman Karen Bass, Mirabella Ngozi Nwaka (Intern).

Follow up on the Africa's Great Lakes Related Conflict Mineral Law (Dodd-Frank Act , Section 1502)

After the Feb 6, 2015 briefing organized by the office of Senator Dick Durbin with contributions from AFJN, the work to protect this law from being repealed or watered down is ongoing. We had a meeting with the Swedish Foreign Minister at their Embassy in Washington, DC, to advocate for strong support of European Union's conflict mineral law.



Jacques Bahati , Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom, Sasha Lezhnev, John Prendergast

The Washington , DC, annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD)

Fr. Aniedi continues to play the role of Chair of the Africa Track of this annual conference. The 2015 conference focused on *"Breaking the Chains" of Mass Incarceration & Global Exploitation* and brought together about 1,000 participants.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)



Ambassador James C. Swan to the D.R Congo and Jacques Bahati

We remain engaged on DRC issues. Bahati has represented AFJN at NGO and State Department's forums. On March 22, Bahati was part of a small group of people invited to a briefing on "The Peaceful Transfer of Executive Power" by US Ambassador to the DRC, James Swan.

We also sent a brief to the White House National Security Council detailing the

need to deal with the rise of *the Allied Democratic Forces and National Army for the Liberation of Uganda* (ADF-NALU), an extremist Islamic group currently operating in the DRC.

Fr. Barthelemy Bazemo appointed At-Large Member

Following his presentation at the Forum on Global Violence Prevention from a faith-based perspective on Means of Violence, Fr. Bazemo was appointed *At-Large Member* of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies in Washington in March 2015.



Presidential Term Limit: Burkina Faso as an African Model

In the light of AFJN's presidential term limit advocacy campaign in Africa, we closely followed the political transition in Burkina Faso and advocated for US support of the transitional government. On December 29, the day Mr. Marc Rock Christian Kaboré was sworn in as democratically elected President, we published "*A Journey of a Nation from Tyranny to Democracy*", an analysis of dictatorship in Africa, why and how to remove a dictator from power. This piece highlights some of the steps of the 2014 successful Burkina Faso popular revolution.



Highlights of AFJN Media Appearance



Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP on *Voice of America TV "Straight Talk Africa Program"* with program host Dr. Shaka Sali

AFJN Executive Director Fr. Aniedi Okure appeared several times on *Voice of America TV "Straight Talk Africa Program"* and on *Africa 54 TV* in 2015. He discussed "Dr. Martin Luther King's Legacy of Non-Violent Actions and Peaceful Protests and the Quest for Racial Justice in America", Pope Francis' visit to the United States, and "Religious Tolerance and Interfaith Solutions in Africa." He also spoke on Pope Francis's visit to Africa on *Africa 54 TV*. AFJN was featured three times on *WPFW Radio 89.3 FM Radio*; once to cover the postponement of the Nigerian Elections and twice to discuss the situation in Burundi.

He appeared on *Channels TV*, with interviews on the Nigerian Elections, the shootings in South Carolina, the visit of Pope Francis to the United States, Nigeria post-election and Christmas Celebrations among African Diasporas in the US. We were also the guest on *NPR-KPBS Radio Los Angeles* and *AMECEA news*.

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