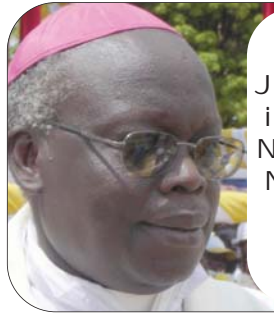




JUSTICE AND PEACE NEWS

Newsletter of the Justice and Peace Commission of Gulu Archdiocese - "If you want peace, work for Justice"

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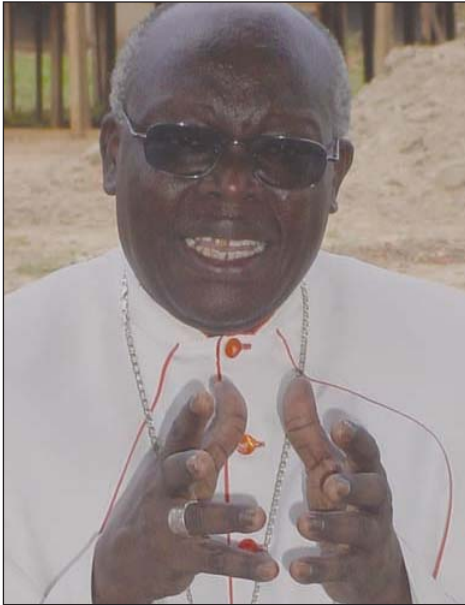
"We need a better Uganda"

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WHEN WILL OUR MISERY END? These children from Pabo Internally Displaced Persons camp seem to be questioning the world. By this year, we are making 20 years of insecurity and ten years of life in the IDP camps. "And with the passing of each day, the future of Acholi, as a community, looks more opaque," (Rwot Acana II). The erosion of Acholi cultural values gains more momentum. The suffering of the people through mental torture, sickness, witnessing deaths of love ones continue unabated.

Archbishop in UN Security Council



WE NEED YOUR INPUT: John Baptist Odama

On January 27th 2006, the Most Rev. John Baptist Odama, Archbishop of Gulu Archdiocese was invited to present a case for the situation in the war ravaged northern Uganda in the United Nations Security Council. Below is the excerpt.

“ It is indeed a great honour for me to have been given this very rare opportunity to address you, distinguish members of this most important executive organ of the United Nations, the Security Council. I bring you greetings and voices of the people of Uganda and of the Uganda Catholic Bishops.

I particularly bring you the greetings and voices of the distressed and down trodden people of Northern Uganda crying out for peace.

The spirit with which I humbly stand and

speak to you is deeply rooted in the universal belief zealously cherished by you and us all that each human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights, and that because each person is endowed with reason and conscience, we are to treat and live with one another in the spirit of true brotherhood. Indeed, by the divine design we belong to each other and need each other.

This innate sense for our common humanity, inscribed in the heart and mind of each person by God, constitutes the very foundation of the United Nations and gives meaning to all the activities of its various organs. It propels us to work relentlessly for universal peace and human advancement all over globe.

We are cognizant of the fact that since its establishment, the security council has exerted itself untiringly to see that evils like wars, which bring untold misery to mankind, discord and division, inequality, and instill hatred among peoples, are not only rejected and condemned but actually got rid of.

We notice with deep gratitude the many efforts by the Security Council to stop armed conflicts between and within many countries with the intent of establishing lasting peace and harmony among peoples worldwide.

The council has, for example, made issues of the relation between Israel and Palestine, conflict in Afganistan, Bosnia Iraq and of very recent, the Sudan on the three-years old war in Dafur and the democratic of Congo, important subject of its security debates.

Kindly permit me your excellencies to draw your particular thoughts to the unspeakable humanitarian crisis in North and North Eastern part of Uganda cause by the 20 years old war in the region. Some people described this war as the unforgotten war.

To many others, this war is largely the most unknown war on the globe. The war, that has no end in sight, continues to impact very adversely on the poor and defenseless population.

As your Excellencies might all be aware, the Northern Uganda armed conflict started way back in 1986 when the former Government Army, the Ugandan National

Liberation Army (UNLA), regrouped themselves and started a Guerrilla Movement called the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA) determined to oppose the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) led by Mr.Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, now President of Uganda. Several rebels groups emerged during the same period and after a peace accord, known as 'Pece Peace Accord,' signed in 1988.between a UPDA faction and Government in Gulu. The Lord Resistance Army eventually became the main armed opposition group in the region.

Government has used the military option with intervals of concurrent peace initiatives as a strategy to address the conflict with no predictable end in sights. While the government did make a positive response to the demand -driven Amnesty Law, it has also relentlessly and militarily, pursued the conflict as part of the United States "war against terror' culminating in to labeling the LRA a terrorist organization not to be negotiated with.

The fallacy of the 2002 child-rescue military operation cod-name "Operation Iron Fist" applied concurrently with the Amnesty is its very failure, first to rescue substantial number of abducted children and secondly; preventing the heightened child abductions ,that followed ,leading to a worsened humanitarian situation .

Key Effects of the War.

Your Excellencies allow me to draw your attention to some of the key consequences of this 20 years old war. Wars always provide very good recipe for human rights violations. The two decades of devastating armed conflict in northern Uganda, subject of my presentation today, does not provide any exception. Because of this war, human rights in northern Uganda have been violated.

1. Loss of human lives and properties.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that every one has the right to life, liberty and security of a person. Thousands upon thousands of our innocent people have been killed. Not a single day passes without news that some one somewhere has been killed in North as this senseless war

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KOFI ANNAN, UN Secretary-General. Why has it taken all this long for Security Council to take action on Northern Uganda Conflict?

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continued unabated. Coupled with the loss of lives is the loss of properties. Once a very productive people, the people of northern Uganda, particularly the Acholi, have been reduced into real paupers and beggars.

2. Abductions:

Over 27,000 people, mostly children, have been abducted by the LRA. Most of these have not been accounted for to date. They are believed to either have died or are still in captivity. The majority are abducted from IDP 'protected' camps set up by government to offer protection to the civilians population.

3. Mass displacements:

According to a conservation estimates, over 1,600,000 are displace into makeshift shelters at various internally displaces persons "protected" camps (IDPs) dotted all over the Acholi sub-region and now to the eastern part of the country.

This is one of the most glaring and saddening features of the situation. These IDPs as your Excellencies might have already learnt, do greatly suffer from severe wants and their lives are shrouded in fear, despondency, despair and deprivation.

These IDP 'protected' camps with the assistance of NGOs cannot offer but very basic social services leading to poor education and health services, and inadequacy of safe water and sanitation facilities. The protracted life in camps has also led to the total breakdown of the Acholi traditional social cultural setup.

4. Mistrust:

The 20 years old war has also caused mistrust and some feeling of enmity among the

Humanitarian Crisis and Cry for Peace in Northern Uganda

A paper presented by Archbishop Odama in the United Nations Security Council

various groups of people. The Acholi people, who are most affected, have been blamed en masse by the neighbors who also from time to time fall victims of LRA attacks. Joseph Kony and majority of fighters of the LRA come from Acholi. The long war and the slowness of government to end the war have made most of the Acholi population mistrust the government and say that the government has some willful intention to see that the war continues.

This ever deteriorating and worsening humanitarian situation causes great concern for civil society (CS) living and operating from the war-affected Acholi sub-region and beyond.

We are grateful for the various remedial responses and services to the plight of the people by a number of both international and local Non Governmental Organizations. I would like to single out very clearly the contribution of the World Food Program (WFP).

Without the massive response by WFP in the many past years to provide basic food of Beans and Maize meals, thousands of people particularly the children, living today in the camps would be dead.

It is however, our strong belief that not enough has been done by us and the international community to bring the war in Uganda to an end. Why has it taken so long for the Security Council to put the 20 years old war in northern Uganda as an important agenda for its discussion?

Should man-made laws hinder us from dis-

cussing and intervening for the common good of fellow human being on any part of the globe, however insignificant they may appear on the world scene?

Is it moral to watch a fellow human die when we can help? Should diplomacy override our duties to save life and protect human liberty, and the security and sacredness of person? It is high time the international community intervened and stopped now the senseless war in northern Uganda. This is our appeal to the Security Council.

We believe in Dialogue and not the military as the best means of bringing the war to a peaceful end. The Uganda military, despite the fact that it has more than twenty times the LRA's manpower in northern, has failed to protect the people and humanitarian organizations from not only the LRA but also from some of its own troops who have been in certain cases the major source of insecurity in the camps.

Many humanitarian Agencies have been unable to access majority of the IDP camps because of the lack of protection along many roads in the sub-region. Several Aids Agencies have been ambushed attempting to provide humanitarian assistance.

The Northern Uganda situation calls for clarity of vision and focus on the sense of saving human life.

In view of above, therefore, we relentlessly continue to laud earnest appeal to the International Community to assume a more active and positive direct role, and work towards the expedition resolution of the two decade old conflict

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Don't kill Acholi, marry them instead



These are Karimojong women putting on some of their traditional attire. Some people have reasoned that intermarriage would help to reduce or stop ethnic hatred and cattle rustling in Uganda

The RDC Kitgum has advised the Jie who are presently living there to marry Acholi women as a way of concretizing ties with the ethnic groups rather than killing people. He said killing destroys their friendship.

Mr. Okot Santo Lapolo said this drawing laughter from the crowd while officiating as chief guest at a border meeting between the Jie and Acholi in Orom Sub County in Kitgum District.

The meeting organized by the sub county peace coordinator Rev. Acuru Nacaneri was attended by among others, a team from Justice and Peace Commission (Gulu Archdiocese) Cross-Border programme, the LCV Councilors from Kitgum Matidi, Omia Nyima, Namokora, Orom and other local leaders from within the border area.

There was also a team from Kotido district that comprised a representative from Kotido Peace Initiative (KOPEIN), District representative Mr. Loki Peter Abraham a.k.a Lokipirimoi, the District Special Branch Officer Mr. Locham Gino, Mr. Lobohe Henry of Kotido NGO Forum and a number of prominent Kraal leaders such as Abiriya Maracelo and Lotyang Paulo Lomotoka among others.

The meeting was intended to bring stakeholders from Karamoja and Acholi to try to iron out certain issues that had cropped up between the two tribes over the years. The Acholi have accused the Karimojong of several atrocities they have been committing against the Acholi people. They

included murder, rape, looting, raiding among others. For these reasons they did not want the Karimojong to come to their land.

The Karimojong on their part admitted that all these atrocities were committed by their people but are quick to ask for forgiveness and reconciliation. "We admit that all these things you have listed were done by our sons but let us forget about the past," one of the kraal leaders said.

Mr. Lapolo warned the Karimojong against committing crimes in Kitgum District. He threatened to chase all the Karimojong away using an helicopter gunship and mambas like he has done before. He wondered why there should be any bad blood between the Jie and the Acholi because there are many relations between the two communities.

He went on to count some of the relations the Acholi from Orom have in Kotido and citing numerous of them. "You are killing your own relatives, your uncles and aunties," Lapolo lamented. "Come and get wives from here, look around, there are so many beautiful women and I see very many handsome boys among you like this one here," he said while pointing at one of the Karimojong boys amidst laughter from the crowd.

The meeting ended with the RDC calling upon the people to live harmoniously with the Karimojong and asked them to make a report to the authorities before making any movement.

Is it moral to watch a fellow human die when we can help?

One of the questions Odama asked the UN Security Council

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Children and adults who turned up for Peace Prayers in Adjumani in January 2006. Their counter parts in Gulu and even some parts of Adjumani do not know what is called peace. Thousands abducted, died, some returned but unknown numbers are still under rebel captivity.

through meaningful dialogue.

Recommendations to International Community.

- To end the conflict by prevailing on the warring parties to pursue peace through dialogue outside the conflict zone preferably with the involvement of a third party mediator in a neutral third country and agreed upon by the parties involved.

- Persuade the Government to create peace zone and corridor to be supervised by a United Nation peacekeeping force to enable enforcement of agreement, as well as Relief Agencies easy access to the civilian population, and also to guarantee confidence and security of both the civilian population and the LRA.

- To establish an independent international monitoring team to monitor human rights violations as well as implementation of

peace processes

- To facilitate national and community reconciliation processes for sustainable peace and thus minimizes the recurrence of conflict.

- To contribute to the resettlement and rehabilitation of IDPs and abducted children as well as former LRA fighters back into their communities.

- International criminal court be persuaded to give BIGOMDE peace process a chance and perhaps come in later as part of post conflict management initiatives. It is only then that the ICC will receive full co-operation of the community.

- The Security Council persuades Uganda government to abandon the violent offensive approach into neighboring countries in the name of fighting the rebels.

- Encourage and support the government

of Uganda to implement recommendations made repeatedly by the war afflicted community, particularly on the following issues:

- Increased protection for civilian's population even when they return home and humanitarian agencies.

- Disbanding the IDP 'protected' camps.
- Having National and Community reconciliation.

Lastly but not necessarily the least, your Excellencies, you will please permit me to conclude by giving you my personal commitment. As I had stated earlier that international criminal court (ICC) need to reconsider staying their investigation and the attendant prosecution for the time being because it will jeopardize the fragile peace process. The ICC should instead take and probably charge me instead of Joseph Kony or Vincent Otti. in exchange for the much-needed peace in northern Uganda.

EDITORIAL

WE NEED A BETTER UGANDA

The Uganda National Civic Education Programme has as its title, "Building a Better Uganda." So beautiful a title, isn't it? Going by the daily events, we have to agree that we need a better Uganda: with a population of one and half million people living in 'concentration camps' one has all the reasons to desire a better Uganda.

The recent Global Fund scandal that rocked the ministry of health is just the tip of the iceberg of the level of corruption in Uganda. The fund that should have helped the victims of TB, and Malaria get treatment found its way into the bank accounts of some few individuals. A better Uganda will be that wherein Funds are spent for the benefits of all.

The incident of the so-called 'black mambas' that defiled the sanctuary of the judiciary in the recent past makes us say we need a better Uganda-one wherein everyone is under the law. In a better Uganda, the law is for all and no one is above the law.

The Uganda we have now is guilty of invading, and plundering resources of her neighboring countries. We need a better Uganda-one that respects neighboring countries and their resources. Today's Uganda has glaring differences between the south, and north.

While the south lives in opulent surrounding, and the north and northeast languish in abject poverty. The narrowing or elimination of this south-north gap will lead to a better Uganda.

We need a better Uganda. In the better Uganda, citizens' choice of leaders will be based on candidates' impeccable qualities rather than vote buying in terms of kilos of salt, pieces of soap, and bottles of beer.

We all have a responsibility to build a better Uganda. We can do this by working for a common good.

DECONGESTION: WHAT IS ON THE GROUND

People from Amuru recall that in June 2005 the LC III and the GISO (local security official) told them in a rally that plans were underway to open three new camps:

Okungedi, Labongogali and Otwee. For this, they said, people should recruit 120 new homeguards to beef up security in the proposed new settlements.

At around the same time it was also announced that a commercial farming scheme would begin in Lebngec (in Otwee), providing cash employment for some of the new camp dwellers.

In the following months, some military personnel were seen coming with some unidentified persons who took video footage of a farm in Omeo, which during the 1970s belonged to Ashen, an Indian businessman expelled at the time of Idi Amin.

Started in 1996, Amuru is one of the biggest camps in Acholi, with about 40,000 people who come from one of the most fertile lands in Northern Uganda.

Seven months later they are still to see the promises implemented.

So far none of the three new proposed camps has been started and the much announced farming has never kicked off.

Some speculate that the reason may be because the recruitment was never completed.

Despite the much-publicised Government plans to decongest the IDP camps, so far there is little on the ground to be seen.

Out of almost 100 camps in Acholi, Lango and Teso, so far a handful of few smaller camps have been created.

These are some of the places where we got information that new smaller camps are already in existence or are in the process of being set up:

-Corner Nwoya, split from Anaka, which is 10 kilometres away.

The land has been cleared but so far people have not started moving there. **To page7**

DECONGESTION: WHAT THE GROUND?

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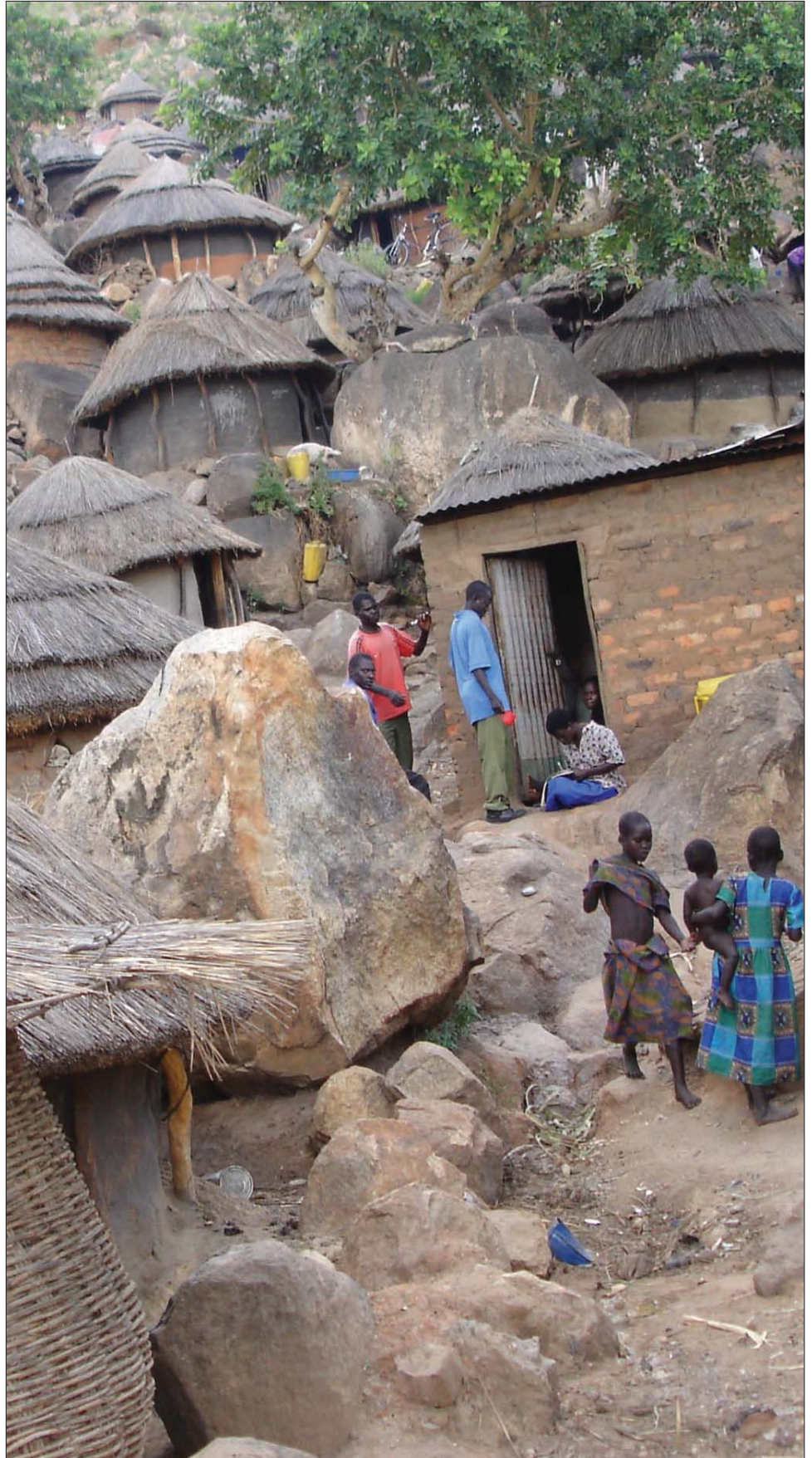
Last September some district authorities told them that people would be organised in groups to engage in work in some commercial farming ventures, which up to now have not started.

•Langol, few kilometres from Alero. People, generally, dig in their own original land.

Yengari, few kilometres from Pabbo (the biggest camp in the North). Created in 2004.

Some people dig in their original land, others whose homes are too far have to asked landlords living more closely to allow them to farm in plots near the new camp.

- Otong, split from Pawel in September 2005. Most people dig in their original land.
- Bira, also from Pabbo. They are still taking the measurements and clearing the land.
- Madi-Kiloch, in Kitgum. There are plans that some people originally from that area staying at the moment in Madi-Opei should move there.
- Dure, in Pader district, split from Amida. People dig in their original land.
- Pacer, in Pader district. People from Kalongo are still reluctant to go there because of insecurity.





Rwot Onen Acana II advises Acholi not to sell their land. He said land is the only asset Acholi people are left with. He wants people resettled to their ancestral land.

Rwot Acana II wants resettle- ment not deconges- tion

At his first coronation anniversary February 4th, Rwot Onen Acana II spoke strongly about Acholi land, decongestion and consolidation of peace.

Below is the excerpt.

At the time of my installation I reflected on a number of relevant issues including continued insecurity and resultant life in IDP camps. At times there was ray of hope that the end of the unfortunate situation was insight since Mrs. Bigombe's effort was pointing towards that target. Unfortunately, that hope has been dashed.

Later this year we will be making twenty (20), years of general insecurity, and ten (10) years of life in the IDP camps. And with the passing of each day, the future of Acholi, as a community, looks more opaque. The erosion of our cultural values gains more momentum.

The sufferings of the people through mental torture, sickness-witnessing deaths of love ones continue unabated. The information and plan for IDPs camps decongestion are very important and welcome as redress to the suffering of the people. However, I must

state from the consent that camps decongestion must not amount to shifting my people from one camp to another. This will tantamount to double tragedy. What is most demanded for is THE RETURN TO THE LAND OF OUR ANCESTORS where the graves of our forefather and mothers are.

That is the MOVE our people yearn for. What difference does it make to inhabitants who have witnessed the beginning of cultural degeneration in one big IDPs camp of

What difference does it make to inhabitants who have witnessed the beginning of cultural degeneration in one big IDPs camp of 30,000 souls but then decongested to two IDPs camps of 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants respectively?

30,000 souls but then decongested to two IDPs camps of 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants respectively? Cultural degeneration continues.

My humble appeal to local and central

Governments is that security be improved to enable persons whose ancestral areas are within ten (10) kilometers from centers of the existing IDP camps move and settle in their original home areas once and for all. In this way such persons will begin to resettle permanently on the land. In the same spirit, therefore I appeal to our NGO friends to look into this proposal most seriously since it seems to be most reasonable approach to decongesting the IDPs camps.

At the time of my installation, I mentioned the important role the restoration of the institution would play in mobilization, consultation and consensus building to meet challenges posed by the continued insurgency.

One of the immediate outcome has been the successful consultative meeting held at Paraa Safari lodge by the Acholi leadership in June 2005. Copies of the proceedings are being circulated during this function for your reading and used. Among others important decision arrived at, the participants built a concrete understanding among them and vowed to work harmoniously under the leadership of the Acholi Paramount Chief and his council of Chiefs and Elders.

Acana implorers subjects to desist from selling any piece of land



It was further resolved that never again should Acholi allow political and other differences to divide them whenever issues of security and survival arose. We also continued to welcome and reintegrate persons who were abducted by the LRA into the community. Traditional and cultural machinery was handsomely used.

This is one of necessary processes in reconstructing lives and social values in Acholi. Ker Kwaro Acholi will continue to play its role in bringing normalcy to the Acholi society.

Apart from engaging in reconstruction of our own lives, Acholi cultural institution is working very hard to restore the cordial mutual trust that used to exist with our neighbors. LRA atrocities on these neighbours have virtually jeopardized that warm relationship which used to flourish between us and southern Sudan, Lango, Teso, Banyoro and West Nile.

For those injured by the inhumane acts, we extend our sympathy and apology. We are determined to restore the relationships through interacting with the community

leaders. Signs for good relationship are already in the horizon.

We have lived in the thick of insecurity for close to twenty years. Our means of livelihood have been greatly interfered with. At this point in time, the confidence of the

we will be making twenty 20 years of general insecurity, and 10 years of life in the IDP camps. And with the passing of each day, the future of Acholi, as a community, looks more opaque

Acholi about their land is at lowest ebb. This anxiety has been caused by repeated remarks by some public office holders.

They wonder how the simple-minded Acholi managed to hold and control such an extensive and rich chunk of land. By implication this means there are some highly placed individuals from outside Acholiland who

wish and long to change the ownership and management of Acholiland to suit their dreams.

We deeply appreciate the foresightedness of our ancestors for having held and defended this land that flows with milk and honey for their prosperity. Through their spirits, we assure them that we shall do what they did for us and in turn, we shall pass the same to our posterity who will yet have to be born.

Let our position on land be made crystal clear. Genuine investors are warmly welcome to initiate small and large scale enterprises the moment insecurity is put to rest, and the indigenous population is set free from IDPs camps. Meanwhile, I passionately implore all my people to desist from selling any piece of land - just out of desperation and poverty - without the consent of our community. Short of taking this stand, persons engaged in selling land will force us all to regret.

In an effort to sketch out the way forward and define the role of Ker Kwaro Acholi in meeting various challenges facing the Acholi Community, we have put in place a Three Year Strategic Plan. But this year we plan to continue with the work we have been doing and others we shall find beneficial to our people. Our main focus however will be on:

- Consolidating peace and reconciliation among the Acholi people by organizing exchange visits to other cultural institutions, solidarity and mobilization visits to the Acholi in the diaspora and dissemination of information on Acholi traditions, cultural practices and bylaws as we believe that peace cannot be obtained by any sole means, but also requires traditional processes of the people within the framework of their cultural norms and dignity.
- Mobilizing the community on the value of land, education and agricultural production and increasing household incomes by mobilizing farmers groups to access agricultural technologies and land, organizing sensitization meetings on latter matters and preparing guidelines on land issues.

- Building the capacity of cultural institution in Acholi by using the opportunities and strength that the regional tier government will bring for promoting our culture, unity and peace.

- Reducing the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS on the community by sensitization and awareness creation and collaboration with organizations and institutions dealing with the dreadful disease including other diseases like malaria.

May I caution that genuine success and assured benefit to the people from the elections will depend on how peacefully the elections are going to be conducted in the spirit of lose and win.

The situation in northern Uganda by January 2006

A most peculiar phenomenon is found in many African countries today. Whereas in the early and mid-nineties wars were raging on from east to west: Somalia, Sudan, DR Congo, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, and northern Uganda, today, almost all the old wars have come to an end and, at least Officially, there is not a single country in the continent where we may speak of a conventional war.

Nevertheless strong-armed conflict and tensions that cause death, poverty and displacement still persist in some countries (Darfur, Ivory coast, Zimbabwe, DRC, Eritrea-Ethiopia). Northern Uganda is one of them. Once described by UN chief humanitarian co-coordinator Jan Egeland as "the world's worst and most forgotten humanitarian crisis", this war which has ravaged the north since 1986 has attracted little publicity worldwide.

Today, the Uganda Army claims that the war is over, but on the ground there are at least 1.6 million internally displaced persons still living in camps, unable to go back to their original homes and suffering from intermittent chronic insecurity.

The fact that this conflict has taken place in an area with no significant economic, commercial or geostrategic interest, together with the government's insistence for years that this was a small internal conflict about to be finished, account for the fact that it has usually attracted little international attention and has not found its way into the international media.

For years Uganda was presented as an African model of economic recovery and promising good leadership, confining this remote conflict to the dark. It has taken many years for it to come out and feature in the international agenda.

THE ORIGINS OF THE CONFLICT

In spite of a peace accord signed in Nairobi in December 1985 between Massiveness' NRA and Tito Okello's military regime, the former attacked and captured Kampala in January 86, taking over the whole country. After a few months of calm the remnants of the former Uganda Army re-grouped and launched a guerrilla war against the new Government.

Ever since a succession of rebel movements emerged in Acholi, and also in Teso also in 1988 the core insurgent group negotiated a peace deal with the Government and the population's initial support for the rebels greatly decreased. Later on in the early nineties, the rebellion in Teso also ended thanks to some local initiatives.

Since 1990 the rebel movement increasingly came under the command of Joseph Kony, whose group came to be known as Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and started getting the full support of the Sudanese Government, as a tit-for-tat response to Uganda's support for the SPLA. In this way the conflict became entangled in international military interests.

A remarkable peace initiative led by the then minister for the north, Betty Bigombe, which enjoyed much success and almost ended the war, collapsed when the president gave to the rebels a seven-day to surrender in February 1994. Ever since the conflict has continued unabated up to now, with the LRA launching periodical attacks in Acholiland and making the population live in terror.

THE WAR ON TERROR AND OPERATION IRON FIST

The US-led war on terror had some influence in the turn that the war took in recent years. At the end of December 2001 at the request of the Ugandan Government, the US secretary of state placed the LRA in list of terrorist's organizations. In March 2002, emboldened by this move, the Uganda Armed Forces (known as UPDF) launched operation Iron Fist, which was meant to root out the LRA by taking the war into southern Sudan, the LRA military and logistical base. This was done with the explicit support of the government of Sudan, which surely fearing American retaliation after September 11 was anxious to be seen taking anti-terrorists measures.

Operation Iron Fist has been a catastrophe for the people of Northern Uganda. Kony evaded captures and most of the LRA poured into northern Uganda. Ever since people in the north have suffered more atrocities than in previous years. Abductions, particularly of children have skyrocketed, displacement has more than tripled and the war has spread to Lango and Teso, northern and eastern sub-regions which for more than ten years had remained calmed.

The government responded by create new explosive situations up to now, and despite official announcements by the government every now and then that the insecurity is practically over, peace in northern Uganda still remains an elusive and distant dreams.

As it happens often with modern warfare, this is war where the vast majority of its victims are innocents particularly the most vulnerable ones like women and children. Although the overall number of people killed as a direct result of violence during these 20 years may not go beyond 200,000, which makes the figures look modest in comparison with death tolls in other conflict such as Sudan and Congo, hundreds or dozen of people have been massacred at a time by the LRA.

many civilians have been brutally maimed or have lost their limbs as a result of stepping on landmines. Traveling through many roads is a great risk because of indiscriminate ambushes making normal social and economic life extremely difficult. Because of the populations lack of support, the LRA has always resorted to massive child abduction as practically the only means to beef up their force. By 2002 UNICEF estimated that since 1994 the LRA had abducted about 30,000 persons, mostly children, and forced them to undergo military training in their bases in Sudan. Many of these young unwilling soldiers

have been used also to fight the SPLA.

Interestingly, one of the justifications for the launching of Operation Iron Fist was "to rescue the abducted children," but instead it has resulted in an unprecedented increase of child-abduction. It is estimated that since mid 2002 up to the end of 2003 the number of abductions was well over 10,000. Many ended up being killed in armed confrontations with the Uganda Army. The lucky ones who managed to escape have come back deeply traumatized, and face a hard life of reintegration since their former communities are destroyed, many find that their parents are dead and opportunities to continue with their studies are scarce.

Since the year 2002, a new phenomenon known as "child night-commuters" has become an outstanding feature of this conflict. Between 2002 and 2004 humanitarian organizations on the ground estimated that about 40,000 children trek from their homes every evening into the relative safety of the main towns like Gulu and Kitgum. During the last few months the number has reduced greatly due to some improvement in the situation in areas close to the main towns.

MASSIVE DISPLACEMENT

In 1996 the Army started forcing thousands of civilians out of their villages in Gulu district into the so-called "protected villages." Few months later, in January 1997, a five-day massacre in Lamwo County, in Kitgum, was left more than 400 killed by the LRA forced thousands into displacement. By the beginning of 2002 there were 400,000 internally displaced persons in Acholi, mainly in Gulu and Kitgum.

In Sept. 2002, the army issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the civilian population to leave their homes or be considered as rebels. The whole of Pader district, which up to that time had almost no displaced camps and where people used to stay in their villages, became 100% displaced. People in few remaining villages in Kitgum where people had resisted leaving their homes all these years were forced out by the army during the last months of 2003 and beginning of 2004. When the LRA attacked Lango and Teso regions in mid 2003 hundreds of thousand more became displaced, and although the government announced in November 2004 that plans were underway to return the displaced population to their original villages, recent ambushes on the roads have convinced people that security is not yet enough for them to do so. People who once used to live a self-reliance existence on farming are now idle most of the time. This unnatural way of living under appalling conditions is rapidly destroying traditional cultural and moral values.

The incidence of HIV/AIDS in these camps is shocking. According to church sources, areas in Kitgum where the HIV rates never went beyond 5% have gone up to 30% after people were put in camps.

CHRONOLOGY OF RECENT EVENTS March 2006

JANUARY 2006.

- 1st - An IDP was shot and wounded by unidentified gunmen at night at Bobi camp.
- The UPDF said they have killed six LRA rebels in Pader and Kitgum district between Jan. 1st - 10th. Two rebels arrested by the UPDF 503 Brigade and recovered four SMG guns.
- The UPDF 93 battalion also killed Commander Brig. Joseph Kapere of the LRA.
- 3rd - Three civilians were killed by rebels in villages near Ngai (Apach district)
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour visited Northern Uganda.
- 4th - During a peace prayer in Adjumani, archbishop Odama said that he offered himself to go to court to the ICC and prison instead of Kony if that could bring peace to the North.
- 7th - Rebels killed four persons in villages in Dzaipi (Adjumani district).
- 10th - International Crisis Group published report on Northern Uganda, accusing the Sudan Government of still providing shelter and intelligence to Kony.
- 19th - UPDF said they had killed 72 LRA rebels and captured 30 since the beginning of the dry season, among them three captains.
- 20th - The LRA rebels shot dead Paul Okello from Omiya Anyima. The suspected rebels found hunting outside the IDP camp area.
- Masindi district Police Commander Michael Mugambe revealed that 510 students were impregnated in 2005 in the

district. 220 others were defiled and 290 married off. Thousands of Acholi are displaced in Masindi.

- Between Jan. 16th - 22 the LRA rebels killed Paul Mwanya and abducted two girls from Amida sub ward in Kitgum district. The two girls abducted were 13 years old. Paul Mwanya was killed in Laraba village, Okidi parish after he had gone hunting.
- 23rd - 8 UN peacekeepers and 15 LRA died in a clash in Garambe Park in Congo.
- 24TH - Police in Kaberamaido town arrested one UPDF Capt. Charles Edungu for defiling a 14 year old girl.
- Police in Kalongo, Pader district arrested two Local defence Unit (LDUs) personnel for defilement. They were found to have defiled girls of 14 years old from the camps for Internally Displaced Persons. One LDU identified as Bosco Ocan Tabu number 0035 was found to have defiled the daughter of Bruno opiyo of Nimaro Ward.

FEBRYARY 2006

- 10th - Estimated six LRA rebels abducted two people from Kamdini in Apac district but they were rescued. The rebels also looted food and clothes.
- 25th - Former Parliamentary Candidate for Kilak County in Gulu district Anthony Akol was tortured by the supporters of the ruling National Resistance Movement for flashing 'V' sign symbolising Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).
- The UPDF army Commander Gen. Aronda Nyakairima said that by February, the number of LRA rebels remaining was less than 100. He also said the UPDF has already rescued 15000 children from the LRA and killed more than 20 LRA commanders among them: Tabuley, Acel Calo Apar, Nyeko Tolbert Yardin, Opiro Anaka, Dominic Ongwen and Kapere.

Some of the JPC activity of the month

- The Archbishop of Gulu Archdiocese who is also the overall person in the JPC held meeting with the United Nations Security Council and brief them on the situation in northern Uganda. The meeting took place in January 27th in New York.
- Justice and Peace Chairman Fr. Cyprian Ocen, our consultant Cosmas Lam and programme officer James Oweka participated in the evaluation meeting of the Peace day held in Adjumani. The meeting came up with ideas that will guide another peace day to held in January 2007 in Lira diocese.
- We trained over 200 paralegals in civic and voter education. They were commissioned to educate the masses on the 2006 Presidential, Parliamentary and local council elections.
- JPC Commission members, staff and the Archbishop participated in the planning meeting that was held at Nabinoonya in Entebbe. The meeting came up with a three-year plan to implement the Justice and Peace Activities in the Archdiocese of Gulu.
- Our staff in Kalongo participated in the launch of Pader District Human Rights Protection and Promotion. JPC is now part of the committee in the district.
- Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) has asked our Pader staff to help supervise and monitor NUSAF peace component. Agreement has been made between NUSAF-Pader and JPC to get involve in the activity.
- Our officer in charge of Acholi-Karamoja Peace Animation held peace dialogue between Karimojong and Acholi in Orom, Namukora, Lapono and Adiland among other places.



Catherine Akello of JPC liaison office, Kampala participating in the planning meeting held in Entebbe

Situation in northern Uganda by January 06

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At present, the official figure of displaced which the WFP uses for its food distribution programme stands at 1.6 million people, but we have to keep in mind that there are tens of thousands more living in informal displacements, plus tens of thousands more who have left the disturbed zones, mainly in Acholiland, and migrated to other parts of Uganda and even abroad.

INITIATIVE FOR PEACE

In 2000, soon after signing a peace agreement with the Sudan Government brokered by the Carter Center, the Uganda Government passed an Amnesty Law, which has enable an estimated 10,000 persons to return home from the LRA. The Church has always supported this Law and it has encouraged rebels to come back and benefit from it.

Also in August 2002 the government appointed a Presidential Peace Team, which was active during March and May 2003, but later on left Gulu after a one-month ceasefire collapsed.

Since 2002 up to mid 2003, some religious leaders under the leadership of the Archbishop of Gulu John Baptist Odama, together with some cultural leaders held a number of meetings with top LRA commanders in an effort to bring the rebels and the government to the negotiating table and end the conflict peacefully.

Later in 2004 former minister Betty Bigombe took the lead of the mediation, which looked promising after two ministers met with LRA spokesman Brig. Sam Kolo in the bush at the end of Dec. 2004. Nevertheless, the shaky ceasefire collapsed again at the beginning of 2005 and eventually talks entered into a stalemate after Kolo defected to the government in February.

There is no doubt that at the beginning of 2005 the LRA is militarily weak. During the last two years they lost thousand of their fighters. Almost 30 of their top commanders have been killed, captured or they have surrender. Yet while they can't pose any serious threats to the Government, their continuous attacks on civilians prevent the normalization of their lives. Judging from what recent returnees say, they may not be more than a few hundred individuals, yet spread over a very vast area in zones of Northern Uganda, South Sudan and Eastern Congo.

the Sudan Comprehensive Agreement was always considered a crucial factor in brining the northern Uganda war to an end, yet it is almost one year since it was signed and here (in northern Uganda) we to are still to see any results. of late a number of sources have expressed concern that Kony may still be receiving some supports and shelter from elements of Sudan Armed Forces. the SPLA make a lot of display of rhetoric stating that they will crush them, but the fact is that the LRA continued to disturb the population of south Sudan and Northern Uganda preventing the normalization of the lives of most ordinary people.

At the beginning of October 2005 the international criminal court (ICC) made public the arrest warrant for five top LRA commanders (one of them already dead) these warrant had already been signed in July, but kept secret. The chief prosecutor was very optimistic that the arrest would be implemented before six month. In Acholi there are many different views about the ICC's intervention, although many people don't feel free to talk openly about them. Surely, most of the population would be happy if the arrest took place and the war could come to a speedy end.

While the Army has said once again that it will finish the rebels before the end of the dry season, most people in Northern Uganda recall that similar announcement have been made many time in the past and their attitude continues to be of deep skepticism.

THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION.

With 1.6 million IDPs, Uganda still stands as one of the worst and most forgotten humanitarian crisis" in August this year a Government-sponsored report gave the figure of 1,000 death a week in those camps. Suicides, appalling condition of

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overcrowding, lack of hygiene, family and cultural breakdown, alcoholism and desperation continue to be the order of the day. Much has said about decongestion programme so far with little to show. In practice this tragedy doesn't seem to be one of the Government's high priorities.

Army human rights abuses in these camps have become more than just isolated incidents. Month after month the justice and peace commission of Gulu archdiocese receives credible report of civilians being arbitrarily arrested, beaten up, robbed of their properties and even killed by soldiers. According to our sources 32 civilians were killed by UPDF soldiers during 2005. some of other cases were documented and published in a report by human rights watch in September. Despite defensive statements by the Army, often the culprits are just transferred to other military unit and Justice is denied to the victims.

On December 27th last year the Army shot against a crowd of displace persons in Lalogi IDP camp who had gone to the detach to protest for the death of a young man the night before at the hands of a soldier. six people were killed and sixteen wounded .up to now no body has been held accountable for having ordered the shooting.

As part of the less visible part of the conflict, there

is a worrying spread of mental disorders among IDPs, particularly depression, which seems to affect women more than men. Also, the issue of reconciliation, whatever is said in public, remain at a very superficial level and need to be addressed seriously.

PROSPECTS AND ACTIONS NEEDED FOR THE NEAR FUTURE.

Something decisive and unexpected could happen with the LRA that may change the situation up said down in a short time. In this respect, the government of Sudan must proof with action that they are serious about solving this crisis. Also, the official mediator, Ms. Betty Bigombe, who is well known for her resilience, needs to be supported much more to find another track for a peaceful end, so that the ICC's intervention does not imply closing the door once and all to the peaceful negotiated solution.

Unfortunately, we cannot discard the possibility of just continuing with the situation as it is, with a low-intensity conflict, with low visibility and few incidents, but bad enough to prevent the normalization of the IDPs in the camps during 2005 at least 180ncivilians were killed by rebels in Acholi and Lango (figures from our justice and peace commission of Gulu, estimated to be low since many incidents especially in Kitgum and Pader go unreported) often in most brutal ways, enough to send waves of terror continue keeping our population hostage.

People can't understand how the Government says every now and then that the number of remaining rebels stands at two hundred, one hundred, eighty or even thirty, with average figures of fifteen to twenty more rebels killed every week by the Army and at the same time people are still kept in the displaced camps. The supposedly military weakening of the LRA is not translated on them to normalize their lives and go back to their homes. In Northern Uganda we have had enough of displacement. Time has come for a clear and consistent policy of resettlement from the Government.

To speak of decongestion, which in practice means to create more camps, only sends more confusing signals to the people in the north, many of whom harbor the suspicion that their land will be taken away, making them even poor. A gradual resettlement of all IDPs could begin by helping people living in a radius of few kilometers around the camps voluntarily resettle in their original homes, with adequate provision for security and essential services. This radius could gradually be increased, as trust is built, until in a matter of months all displace persons can go back to their homes and live in their land and off their land.

For all this to happen we cannot do without the help of the international community at the highest level, the UN security council, which is very mush overdue. **JPC**