

End Museveni's silent war in northern Uganda

by Linda de Hoyos

Speaking at his enthronement as the Bishop of the Diocese of Gulu in northern Uganda on May 13, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Nelson Onono-Onweng called upon the government of Uganda and all warring parties to come to the peace table and finally bring to an end the 12-year-long war in northern Uganda. To the listeners, who included Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, and high officials of both the Church of Uganda and the Ugandan government, the Bishop pleaded for those responsible to act to alleviate the suffering of the Ugandan people: "Today, we call upon the people of Uganda to reconcile. Today, we call upon Joseph Kony and his LRA [Lord's Resistance Army] forces to reconcile and stop this destructive strife. Today, we call upon His Excellency the President of Uganda and our Government to talk peace with the rebels in northern and western Uganda. Today, we call upon the Government of the Sudan, and the Government of Uganda to improve their relationship in order to end this conflict. Today, we also call upon the international community to respond to the cries of our people in this region, and take active and speedy interest to influence all the concerned to end the conflict."

In direct response to this challenge, Museveni demurred, motivating his continued commitment to a "military solution" to the war by stating that "bad people cannot voluntarily give up their bad ways unless put under pressure." Since the Nov. 5, 1997 Rally for Peace in Kampala, where Roman Catholic Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala and Bishop Macleord Ochola of the Church of Uganda led thousands in a march to call upon the government to end the war in northern Uganda, Museveni has "stuck by his guns," refusing either to deal militarily with the insurgent LRA, or to negotiate with it.

Museveni's policy, even this spring, shows the total ineffectiveness of this stance. On March 18, the Ugandan dictator travelled to the city of Gulu personally to give political back-up

to the Ugandan troops deployed to the area allegedly to fight the LRA. Ugandan forces, he said, are occupying the strategic hills of Kademeri near Bibia and Adodi hills on the Uganda-Sudan border, to ensure that the LRA, which takes sanctuary in Sudan, would not come into Uganda. At the same time, Ugandan sources reported truck caravans delivering weapons, military equipment, and troops to northern Uganda.

But since then, the attacks by the LRA have only escalated, as the LRA entered Uganda from Sudan in mid-April with ease, and swooped down all the way into the southern counties of Kitgum (see map), and attacked "protected villages" at Alero, Anaka, Adilang, and Awer. In short, it would appear that the LRA operates with impunity in northern Uganda—as Museveni rebuffs all calls for a peace process to end the war.

The punishment is being meted out instead to the civilians of the war districts of Gulu, Moyo, Kitgum, Apac, and Lira, who are caught in a deadly cross-fire. It is estimated that 300,000 members of the Acholi group in these districts have been killed in the war.

As of this writing, nearly half a million people in these sparsely populated districts are displaced, and herded into concentration camps which Museveni calls "protected villages" (see map). There are 38 "protected villages" in northern Uganda, where people have been forced to live. Either people go to the camps willingly, out of terror of the LRA, or they are rounded up by government troops and forced to go. In Moyo district, many people have been forcibly removed to villages in completely different districts. The camps are fenced, and persons leaving the perimeters can be suspected of being LRA sympathizers and can be shot. Often, the camps are built beside military barracks, making them shields for Museveni's troops and the "protected villages" targets for LRA attack.

Conditions in the camps are in direct violation of the Geneva Conventions. According to Article 17 of Protocol II of those Conventions, “should such displacements have to be carried out, all possible measures shall be taken in order that the civilian population may be received under satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety, and nutrition.” In violation of this Article, in Museveni’s concentration camps, as the accompanying interview describes, the people are on the brink of dying — without food, without water, and even without security. Famine stalks the entire region, but there is no relief, either from the government, or from international agencies. Since the people in the camps are “internally displaced,” they are not “refugees,” and therefore international agencies cannot provide relief unless called upon by the government. Museveni has not asked them to do so.

London’s little war

Museveni’s recalcitrant refusal to end the war and bring relief to the population is matched only by the international community’s silence concerning it—the tip-off that the war in northern Uganda is not a domestic Ugandan issue.

In just one recent example, the *Baltimore Sun* featured a full-page article on May 17 on famine in southern Sudan, taking the Khartoum government to task as being responsible. In reality, Sudan has bent over backward to work with Operation Lifeline, run by the international relief agencies, to bring food into the war zones of southern Sudan, where the secessionist Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) has created havoc upon the southern populations.

Furthermore, Sudan has willingly engaged in a peace process to end the war in southern Sudan, started by the SPLA’s John Garang in 1983, and has made major concessions to southern demands, bringing nearly all factions previously engaged in the war to sign the April 21, 1997 peace accords.

Yet, while indulging in a diatribe against the Sudanese government, the *Baltimore Sun* says not one jot about northern Uganda, where the same famine conditions pertain, where war continues with no military resolution in sight, and where the *head of state refuses to come to the peace table*.

The *Baltimore Sun* employee who wrote the article, Gilbert Lewthwaite, had in 1996 traveled to southern Sudan illegally with Baroness Caroline Cox, leader of Christian Solidarity International, as part of the Baroness’s crusade for a war against Sudan.

Cox, who is also a Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, has been demanding that the Clinton administration carry out a full-scale war against Sudan. In September 1997, her crusade carried the day at a conference at the misnamed U.S. Institute for Peace, where Roger Winter of the U.S. Committee of Refugees, sidekick Ted Dagne of the Congressional Research Service, and John Prendergast of the U.S. National Security Council demanded war against Sudan, castigating the State Department for its emphasis on “diplomacy.” In the December 1997 trip of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright

to Uganda, she traveled north to Gulu and declared full U.S. backing for Museveni to wage war northward into Sudan. The policy is being enforced within the administration by Prendergast, along with Susan Rice, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, and various underlings.

The war should be prosecuted, said Winter in September, “even though I know it will bring about a humanitarian catastrophe.”

The war is also being demanded by the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu, which has major interests in turning the Red Sea into an Israeli lake and also for asserting itself in Uganda, from whence it can control the headwaters of the strategic Nile River.

These are the overriding geopolitical aims coming from London, Israel, and their allied networks in the United States, that are perpetrating the war in northern Uganda, killing the population there under the conspiracy of silence based on a military alliance with the British-installed warlord Museveni.

Thus, the troops Museveni ostentatiously moved northward in March are not being utilized against the LRA, but to back up John Garang in his continuing efforts to take chunks of territory in southern Sudan, so that he can bargain with the Sudan government from a position of military strength—a strategy which is not even working.

Museveni’s reasons

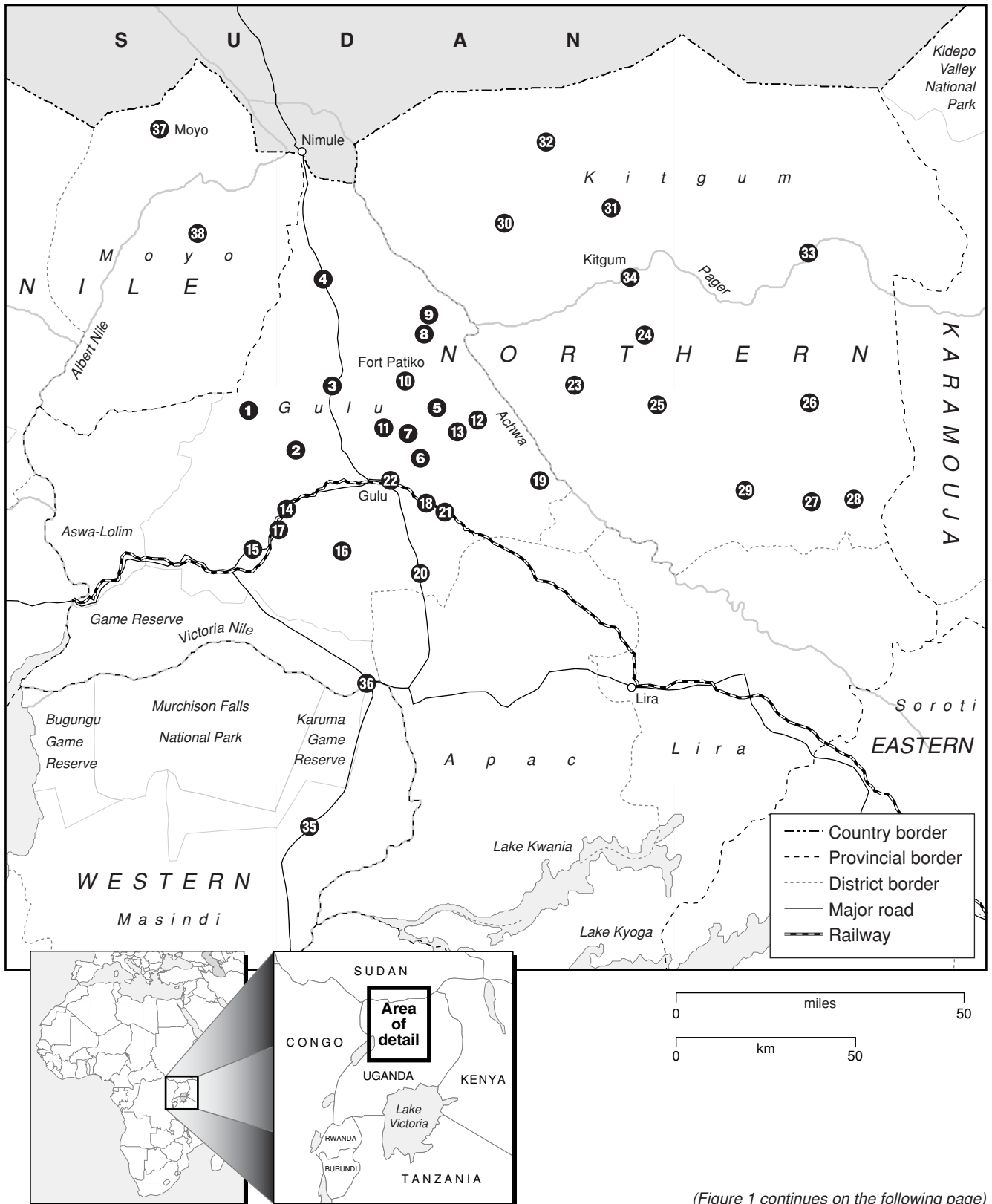
If northern Ugandans are being decimated by the war, Museveni has thrived on it. Upon taking power in 1986, Museveni moved his National Resistance Army forces northward to defeat the remnants of the Ugandan People’s Democratic Army of former President Tito Okello, an Acholi from the north. Despite the disarming of many UPDA troops by concerned civilian leaders in the north and guarantees that Museveni’s forces could move in peacefully, he unilaterally declared war on the region, burning villages and herding all the livestock into southern Uganda.

The war between the LRA and Museveni has been going on ever since, with neither side making any military headway. The war permits him to keep the northern part of the country in a state of abject poverty and military occupation, and to maintain the entire country in perpetual insecurity—thus justifying his military regime.

In 1994, Museveni halted a peace process that had begun with LRA commander Joseph Kony. The LRA has recruited to its ranks by means of abduction from the local Acholi population, in which every family has lost children either to abduction or to murder when the LRA attacks. Although the Acholi community and religious leaders have been working assiduously for a peace and reconciliation process with the LRA, Museveni has spurned all peace attempts.

As for the LRA, its top “political affairs” leader, Powell Onen P’Ojwang, is headquartered in — where else? — London. Onen is reputed to be a shyster who was reported in the July 6, 1997 *News of the World* to have been involved in a scam to

FIGURE 1
Museveni's 'protected villages' in northern Uganda



(Figure 1 continues on the following page)

FIGURE 1 (continued)

Sub-division	County	Number of Persons
<i>Gulu District</i>		
1. Amaru*	Kilak	32,000
2. Awe	Kilak	11,000
3. Pabo*	Kilak	20,000
4. Atiak	Kilak	14,000
5. Awac	Aswa	8,000
6. Onyama	Aswa	6,000
7. Coo-pee	Aswa	9,000
Palaro	Aswa	
8. Made-ade township		4,000
9. Labwonyaro-moo township		5,000
10. Patiko	Aswa	7,000
11. Gwenya-deyo	Aswa	6,500
12. Cwero	Aswa	3,700
13. Paicho	Aswa	5,200
14. Alero*	Nwoya	28,000
15. Anaka (Payira)*	Nwoya	36,000
16. Koc-Goma	Nwoya	5,000
17. Koc-Ongako	Nwoya	7,000
18. Acet	Omoror	16,000
19. Odek	Omoror	11,000
20. Bobi*	Omoror	7,000
21. Lakwaramer	Omoror	6,000
22. Gulu City		50,000
<i>Gulu District Total</i>		<i>297,400</i>
<i>Kitgum District</i>		
23. Lacek-ocot*	Aruu	7,500
24. Acholibur	Aruu	5,000
25. Pajule	Aruu	22,000
26. Kalongo*	Agago	6,000
27. Patongo	Agago	21,000
28. Adilang*	Agago	approx. 5,000
29. Lira Palwo*	Agago	approx. 5,000
30. Palabek-Kal*	Lamwo	9,000
31. Padibe*	Lamwo	7,000
32. Lokung*	Lamwo	approx. 3,000
33. Naam-okora	Chua	20,000
34. Kitgum City		50,000
<i>Kitgum District Total</i>		<i>160,500</i>
<i>Masindi District</i>		
35. Kiryadongo		
36. Karuma		combined 26,000
<i>Moyo District</i>		
37. Moyo		
38. Adjumani	camps under construction	
Grand Total		483,900

* "Protected villages" that have come under military attack by the Lord's Resistance Army.

defraud investors of £2.5 million, a fraud for which he has not been prosecuted, but for which he is reportedly under investigation in the United States. Onen, who reportedly keeps some funds flowing to the LRA, is as adamantly opposed to a peace process as his erstwhile opponent Museveni.

Thus the people of northern Uganda are being put through unending suffering and death, by a criminal symbiosis among Museveni, the LRA leaders, and the British/Israeli and U.S.-allied networks who keep Museveni in power for their geopolitical designs in all East Africa—designs that are costing millions of African lives.

Interview

Protected villages: no food, no security

This interview with a teacher from Agago County, Kitgum District, Uganda, was conducted by telephone on May 17 by Linda de Hoyos. The teacher's town and home were attacked by the Lord's Resistance Army earlier in May. The name is withheld for reasons of security.

EIR: How would you describe the situation in northern Uganda now?

A: The situation is not good as regards to the feeding. People are starving.

EIR: Are they starving in the protected villages, or in the entire area?

A: It is just the general area itself.

EIR: Why is that?

A: I think there have been long periods of no rain, and then, because the people are displaced and their food and everything have been looted, it is nearly impossible for them to have enough food.

EIR: How big is the camp in Agago?

A: It is big, but I cannot be specific about the number. But, the influx is great.

EIR: And people come into the camp every night, or are they there all the time?

A: They come when the situation is [one of] fear; they go back and then come into the camp. They go back and dig a piece, and then come back in the morning to the camp and sleep in the camp. The people who come from far away, they just stay there in place.

EIR: Do these camps have buildings? Do people live inside, or outside?

A: They just get settled and they build a small hut where they live. They call them protected camps, whereby they move where the army personnel, the barracks, are—that's where they usually stay, near the barracks. But, there are times the protection itself is not possible, because just last week, some few were abducted from within a few feet in the camp in Gulu.

EIR: There is a fence around the camps?

A: Yes.