

On the military conflict in the Great Lakes Region of Africa

by Godfrey Lukongwa Binaisa

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Uganda's military aggression against the Democratic Republic of Congo is a blatant violation of international law and an affront to the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). As a Ugandan patriot and a staunch pan-Africanist, I have learned with great disquiet of Uganda's military adventure in the Congo.

President Yoweri Museveni has argued that the need to protect Uganda's national interest and to secure its western borders against infiltration by Uganda guerrilla forces opposed to his regime compelled Uganda's military involvement in the Congo. This argument dissembles the truth and does not stand up to scrutiny. The truth of the matter is that Uganda is the aggressor, because it launched the attack against Congo by clandestinely fomenting and supporting a rebellion against a sovereign state and then coming out openly in armed aggression against a state that has no designs on Uganda.

This act of aggression by Uganda forms a pattern of aggression by President Museveni against neighboring African states. Between 1986 and 1990, Uganda recruited and trained a guerrilla army led by Brigadier Odongo against the government of Kenya. In 1990, and then in 1994, Uganda invaded Rwanda and sponsored a guerrilla war that sparked off the genocide in Rwanda and displaced millions of people throughout the Great Lakes Region. In 1997, President Museveni sponsored a rebellion in the then Zaire, while assuring the OAU and the rest of the world that he was in fact mediating the conflict in Zaire. From 1986 to 1998, President Museveni has sponsored the Sudanese People's Liberation Army against the government of Sudan. The government of President Museveni has emerged as a powerful neo-colonial regime whose militarism has destabilized the whole region of East and Central Africa. The only parallel in history to Museveni's militarism is Hitler's Germany.

Uganda is a poor country that relies heavily on foreign aid for its operating budget. Where does Uganda get the money and the arms with which to finance and sustain a cam-

paign of terror and aggression in Africa? Who are President Museveni's sponsors? Who stands to benefit from wars and genocide in the very heart of Africa? And what has the government of President Museveni done to combat mass poverty and illiteracy and disease? In short, whose agenda is President Museveni sponsoring in Africa?

A call to condemn aggression

I call upon all Africans who value peace and development to come forward to condemn and resist this aggression unreservedly. The lesson from Munich is that evil and aggression, however banal they might at first appear, should never be appeased or tolerated.

The question to be asked is where are the leaders of the Christian and Muslim churches in Africa in the face of such blatant aggression? When will the churches condemn what is happening in Uganda and in the Great Lakes Region? Where are the human rights and humanitarian groups? And where are the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity?

I call upon the political leaders, and particularly those who took part in the struggle for independence and subsequent resistance to various dictatorships, to state their stance categorically. History will remember what we say and do today. This is why I congratulate the following leaders: President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe; President Jose Dos Santos of Angola; President Sam Nujoma of Namibia; and other leaders who will no doubt soon join this golden roll of honor of African freedom fighters.

As a sovereign state, the Democratic Republic of Congo has the right to self-defense and has the prerogative under international law to ask for and to receive both unilateral and multilateral assistance from any country. This is the sacred right of every sovereign state. Consequently, assistance to the Democratic Republic of Congo must be distinguished from support for the rebel forces, which support is illegal under international law. Nothing less than the principles of national sovereignty and territorial integrity are under attack by those countries which have instigated and sponsored the invasion of and the war in the Congo. Uganda and Rwanda must be condemned in no uncertain terms for their invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is morally imperative that the international community must not treat the aggressors the same way it treats the victim of the aggression.

Africa rejects being used as a guinea pig upon which to experiment the so-called new ideas of government, which are nothing more than open tyranny by one man, and the imposition of a minority rule over the great majority of our people, merely because they are armed to the teeth with foreign support. We have learned one indelible lesson from slavery and colonization — the foreign oppression and domination require indigenous collaborators. After slavery and colonialization, we must never allow Africa to be subjugated again.

May God bless and defend Africa.