

**TANGAZA COLLEGE**

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**INSURGENCY IN THE NORTHERN UGANDA AND  
VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: A CHALLENGE TO  
MISSION ACTIVITIES. A CASE STUDY OTUKE CAMP.**

Moderator

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for  
Bachelor of Arts in Theology

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## **Dedication**

**This work is dedicated to my parents: Mr. Francis Rob Econg and Haida Angom.**

### Student's Declaration

I, the undersigned, do declare that this long Essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflections. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious studies. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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*28<sup>th</sup> Jan. 2005.*

This long Essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the college supervisor.

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*28-1-2005*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks to the Almighty God for having guided me and given me good health all through until the completion of this work.

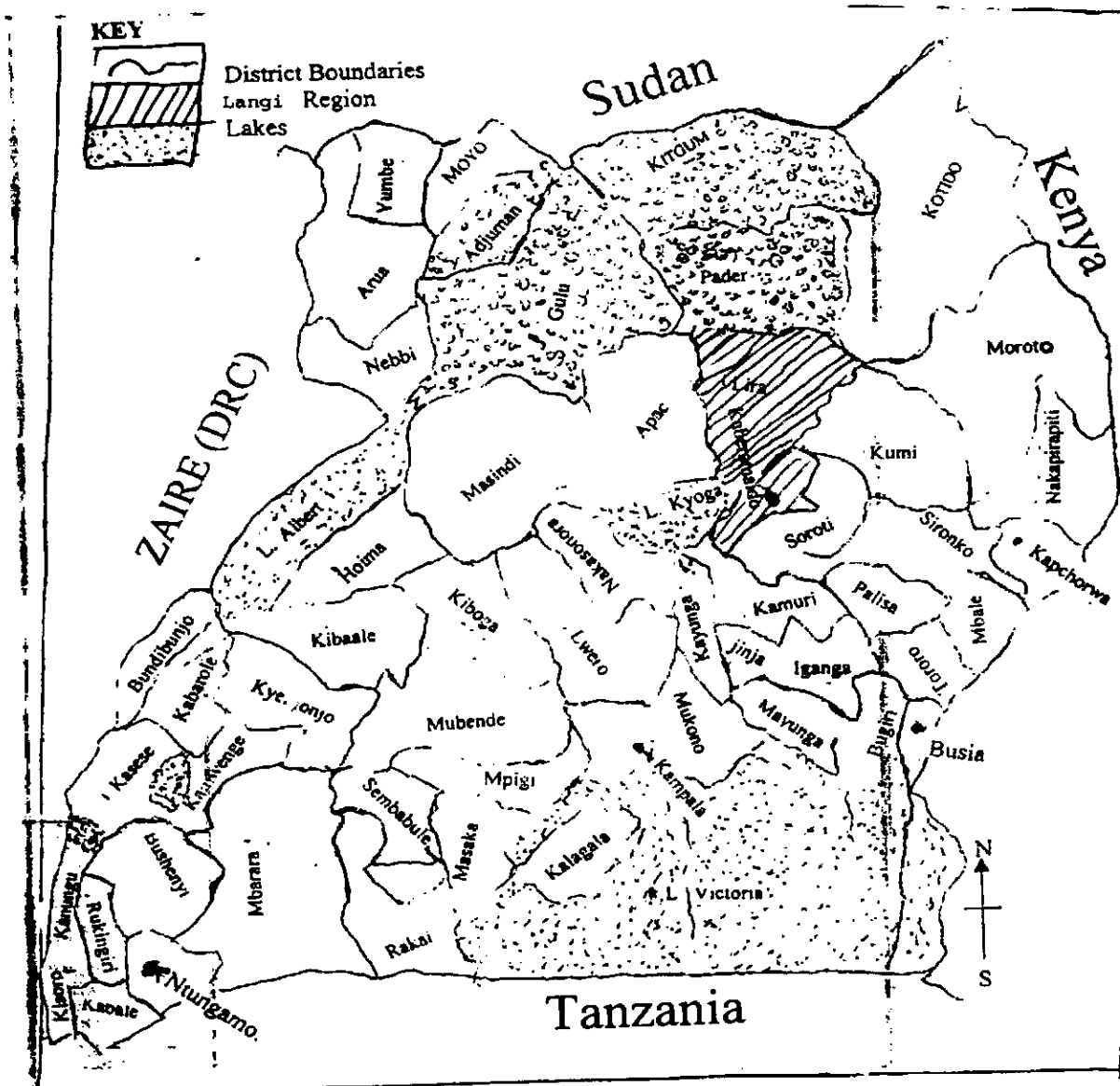
Special thank are due to my confreres for their encouragement that has led to the success of this work. In particular I thank Fr. Barry Moriarity the superior my community at Depaul centre for his support.

I thank Rev. Dr. Fr. Marcellus Kawasonga head of Department of Education at Catholic University of Eastern Africa, who supervised this work; and Fr. Wiseman O.P who corrected the English; I also thank my family members who helped me to find some great persons for interview. I would like to thank all those people of goodwill, my friends who assisted me toward the completion of this work. Finally, I thank the Langi people who provided me with the right material for this Essay.

May the Almighty God bless them all.

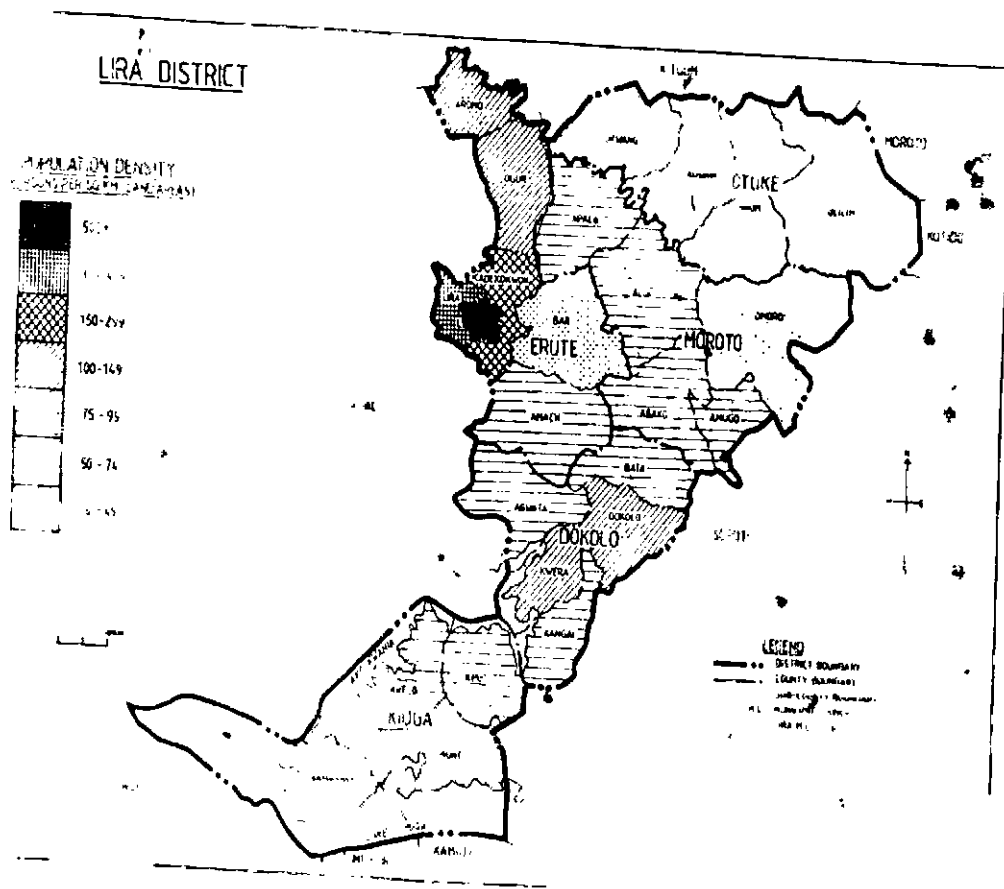
Isonga Alex .S. O. C.M.

**The Map Showing Lango Region Affected by Lord's  
Resistance Army War.**



An Extract of the Uganda Episcopal Conference (Catholic Secretariat) Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2001-2006, June, 2001 (Modified By Author).

Map Showing Lira District affected by Lord's Resistance Army War.



# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## 1. Introduction

The insurgency in northern Uganda is not exactly what is presented by the media. One has to see what it is on the ground. From what one hears from the media one is made to think that this senseless war is affecting only the Acholi ethnic group. No, it is a problem which has affected many tribes neighbouring the Acholi people, especially the Langi. This paper is intended to bring this fact to the attention of the whole nation of Uganda and the rest of the world. This war has also affected tribes like the Teso, Alur, Lugbara, Madi etc. When they hear about northern Uganda most people think of Gulu (Acholi), but the area comprises Gulu, Pader, Kitgum, Lira, Apach, Arua, Nebi and Adjumani, all of whom this war has affected in one way or the other.

During my theological studies in Kenya I used to hear a lot about this insurgency and when I could go home I lived in Jinja and did not have much knowledge of what was really happening in northern Uganda. But last year I heard that 250 innocent people were massacred in the '*Barlonyo*' protected camp in Lira diocese, northern Uganda and I had a chance to see the bodies of the victims. I was struck beyond words; I was stunned by the kind of life in the camp where I went to visit the

Small Christian Community which was created in *Irute* camp in Lira. I was horrified with the terrible poverty, diseases and hunger that people were undergoing. Then I thought it was worthwhile writing a short paper on the violation of human rights caused by the LRA war in northern Uganda. I felt that the government of Uganda could do better than it had already done. In the camps the questions were raised: why all this persecution inflicted on the innocent people; when shall they be free from it? However, the Church in northern Uganda remains a Church of consolation and hope to its people. The Christians in Lira Diocese live a life of sharing and joy in their situation of suffering. And it is their hope that one day they will be free from these persecutions.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Northern Uganda has been experiencing civil war for 18 years beginning from 1986 until now. All the peace efforts of 1994 and of last year, 2004, failed. Due to this war many people close to 2.5 million, are displaced and many people are either in captivity, killed or maimed as a result of landmine traps. Three quarters of them are children and women. Children commute every night to the town of Gulu and Lira to look for refuge from the rebels' abductions. This war has destabilized the economic, social, religious and political organization of the region. There is a lot of suffering in the protected camps and many people are traumatized because of this war and live without any hope for a better future.

## **3. Motivation of the choice of the Topic**

The motivation to choose this topic is the desire to strengthen and integrate my Vincentian spirituality of working for the poor with the experience of the suffering



people in the protected camps (refuge). To write about the life in the protected camps fitted very well with my Vincentian apostolate and Charism.

#### **4. Objectives**

This work has the following objectives:

1. To create an awareness among the Ugandan population of their responsibility to help the suffering people rather than wait for food aid from outside.
2. To create an awareness among the people of the paramount importance of living in peace and harmony.
3. To encourage the people whose rights are being violated, and make them feel that there is always hope from God in a hopeless situation; and to offer some ideas to the pastors who are working in these places of hardships, and to give them some hope.
4. To be a reference and a resource material for peace building to the next generation.
5. To influence the behaviour and attitude of the youth towards peace process.
6. To point out to the Church the challenge facing it that is, to console all the people whose rights are violated and to fight for them before the government and international bodies.

## **5. Method of Study**

For this work, I make the use of scientific research, interviews and personal reading of books. This product, therefore, is theological moral and pastoral in its nature.

## **6. Limitation of Study**

In this paper, special attention was given to the people suffering in the protected camps in northern Uganda, with particular emphasis on Otuke protected camp in Lira district.

## **7. Description of Study Site**

According to Henry Lubwama, in Uganda secondary school Atlas, Lira is situated in northern Uganda, north of lake Kyoga, east of river Nile, bordering districts of Apach, Gulu, Pader, Kitgum, Mukono, soroti, Iganga and Kotido. The origin of Lango ethnic group has been described as the most difficult question in the pre-European history of Uganda. However, some historical sources put the hypothesis that the Lango are mixed blood; a section of the Karimojong and Teso intermarried with the Luo. The Langi occupy two districts of Lira and Apach. They depend entirely on farming of crops like beans, Maize, cassava and cotton and they also keep animals like cows for milk.

## **Chapter I**

### **Background of the Insurgency in Northern Uganda**

#### **1. Introduction**

In this chapter I looked at the situation on the ground: that is; the political, economic, social, spiritual and cultural aspects that led to the insurgency in the northern Uganda. And I will also look at the causes and effects of the war and life situation at the camps.

The current conflict in the Northern Uganda that has led to the marginalization and violation of human rights begun in the year 1986. The conflict has affected nine districts of North and Eastern Uganda and those are Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Adjumani, Arua, Lira, Apach, Nebi, Soroti, Katakwi. But the areas mostly affected at the moment are Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Apach and Lira. My work will mostly concentrate on Lira though I will also touch on other districts to explain the extent of the impact of this insurgency.

The sitting president of the Republic of Uganda, Kaguta Museveni, took over power in January 26<sup>th</sup> 1986 and the soldiers of Tito Okello Lutwa military Junta, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), dispersed to southern Sudan while some remained and were incorporated into the National Resistance Army (NRA) of Museveni. The NRA later asked the remnants of the UNLA to return their guns to the government. However, before they did so the government soldiers started to harass and arresting the UNLA soldiers. This made most of the UNLA to run away to Sudan and others to the villages and forest where they re-organized themselves into a rebel group.

“In August, 1986 they launched their first offensive which later developed into the present insurgency”.<sup>1</sup>

The first opposition to the NRA, however, was the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA) which lasted only until June, 1988 when it signed peace agreement with the government NRA/M in 1988 at Pece stadium Gulu.

Another group of the rebels was formed in the later quarter of 1986, the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) led by a priestess called Alice Auma Lakwena. Alice Lakwena, “claimed to have been inspired by the Holy Spirit medium and urged people to adhere to the 10 commandments of God.”<sup>2</sup> Her forces composed of deserting UPDA and her captured UNLA remnants. She fought the government and was defeated in the south-eastern town of Jinja in 1987. Lakwena is currently given political asylum in Kenya.

After the defeat of Lakwena, her father ‘Lukoya Kiberi’ took over the remnant of her forces in Acholi sub-region to form Holy Spirit movement II. Lukoya called himself “god the father”, but he was also defeated shortly after only one year, in 1989 and he was captured and now he lives in Gulu town in Northern Uganda. After him, the current Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) leader Joseph Kony took over, by whom the current violation of human rights is perpetuated.

From 1998 to the present day, the insurgency under the leadership of Joseph Kony turned on innocent civilians rather than the government soldiers. They did this by attacking and abducting students in schools, attacking hospitals and social centres to

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<sup>1</sup> J.A.A. OTTO *Human Rights Focus, Between Two Fires, The Human Rights Situation in Protected Camps in Gulu District*,5.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. A. OTTO.; *Human Rights Focus* ,6.

disorganize people and their activities. This continued through 2000 until today. This led to the creation of many protected camps in Gulu and later other surrounding districts.

Due to this, in 1998 the government soldiers inflicted forced displacement of civilians in and around Gulu until then. Last year October 2003, there was again forced displacement in and around another Town of Lira in northern Uganda. Until today there are very many innocent civilians suffering in the protected camp near Lira Town.

## **2. Causes of the War**

The 18 year northern insurgency begun as a last stand by the defeated soldiers of “the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), then mutated into a cultish rebellion led by Lakwena before assuming its current senseless brutalization of northern Uganda’s population.”<sup>3</sup>

After the NRA/M take over in 1986, power was concentrated in the west and south of Uganda and people in the north especially the Acholi tribe thought they were neglected and left out of the national cake. So, they thought the only way to have some part of it was to go to the bush to fight for it as Museveni did. Hence the continuation of the war.

Another problem which has led to unending war was the greed for power from the Acholi ethnic group who thought they could take over power from the (NRA/M) government of president Museveni, but it was an unfulfilled dream. All this was because of power greed from the Acholi people.

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<sup>3</sup> *New Vision Newspaper*, Sunday July 18, 2004..

The Acholi people wanted to share some economic gains from the national cake which was not possible for the NRA/M government of Museveni to do. So the Acholi opted for the use of force instead of negotiations with the authority in power; hence the emergence of the rebel activity which culminated in a very inhumane struggle leading to the loss of many innocent lives.

Furthermore, the Acholi wanted to revenge themselves against other tribes who presupposedly tortured them during the overthrow of Tito Okello from the Acholi ethnic group. Fortunately it did not work out as intended but it turned out to be tragic on their side but it has now affected many neighboring tribes around the Acholi people like the Langi on which this research work is based.

Another cause of the war was that “after the NRA/M government took power in January 1986, the president started to tribalize and regionalize power to some places and certain people only”.<sup>4</sup> This did not amuse many people and it brought a lot of unhappiness and eventually increased the rebels’ insurgency which has led to constant disturbances in the northern Uganda region and caused loss of life and property and violations of human rights.

### **3. The Effects of the Insurgency**

The war has affected people in northern Uganda, Lira in particular, politically, economically, socially, spiritually and culturally.

Politically, the war has taken 18 years and it has made the people of Lira district never to experience political calmness to run and organize political systems and

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<sup>4</sup> J. A.A OTTO., *Human Rights Focus*, 7.

administration. This war has been seen by those who live in southern Uganda as the northern war. One big politician in the government once commented, “The northern people are fighting their own war, let them kill each other”. So the problem is not for the whole country but for the northerners. Now those who are not affected think that those affected are ‘bad’, ‘evil’ people. Which is not the way one country should look at itself. This could be one of the reasons why peace cannot be attained. The people concerned don’t take the war seriously because it is not theirs, but the northern war. And yet, Uganda should be viewed by its leadership as one country from north to south, west to east. We should not regionalize our beautiful country (the pearl of Africa).

Also, politically the war has painted the image of the region affected as bad and not reachable by other good people from other places of Uganda; even international friends fear this region. Simply because they are ‘bad,’ ‘evil’ as referred to by some Ugandans. But Ugandans of all sorts and region have constitutional rights to protection and better living standards.

Economically people in the north cannot economically progress because of the war; one local leader Joseph Ochen explained “People are always in the run and because of this the level of poverty is very high especially in the camps”<sup>5</sup> where people depend solely on food donations from UN or the government. People are cut off from their agricultural dependence. One farmer by the name John Odite said if I go to my garden, “I dig while fearing to be attacked anytime by the rebels ( *Pur kede lworo pe*

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<sup>5</sup> J. OCHEN., *Poverty*, (interviewed)

*kelo cem*) and worse, the harvest will be robbed by either the rebels or the government soldiers”.<sup>6</sup>

Socially the camps dwellers are confined within the camps and this is not human and against the international human rights. Everybody is born free to socialize and freedom of movement is for all human beings and due to war this has been curtailed. And worse, the people of the north have very low social status.

Spiritually, as Fr. Andrew Okeng of Aloï parish said “the insurgency has disorganized the spiritual settings of the diocese of Lira because most pastors cannot live in their parish mission and minister to their flocks because of the fear of being attacked and killed”<sup>7</sup>. This is because also the rebels had declared war against the clergy because they believe the clergy were preaching against them. And the challenge that affects the diocese most is the problem of the returnees that come with lots of psychological disturbances and cannot be helped since the pastors cannot be easily be found in their different parishes. This is really a big draw back to the diocese’s evangelization.

Culturally, the area is affected badly as Peter Ebony one elder living in the camp said, “The traditional life of the people is grossly affected since people are not living in their usual settings which are conducive to effective practicing of the customs of the people[...].”<sup>8</sup> Passing on of cultural values has become a nightmare because the camps’ situation is not conducive to effective practice of the culture. For instance gathering to perform customary practices like marriage, naming ceremonies, even things like

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<sup>6</sup> J. ODITE *Safety in Camps*, (interviewed)

<sup>7</sup> A. OKENG (Rev. Fr.), *Faith* (interviewed)

<sup>8</sup> P. EBONY., *Effects on Culture*, (interviewed)



cultural dances which are supposed to be passed on to the new generations are not able to be passed on to the young.

Due to the above situations in these IDPs the dwellers are unable to enjoy their very basic social, economic, spiritual and cultural rights spelt out in the international convention on social, economic and cultural rights which Uganda ratified in 1987.

Here this paper wants to remind the government and President Museveni that Uganda has a constitutional duty and mandate to protect the lives of all its citizens without exception, with their property as well as its territorial borders. The constitutional rights and duty to protection is derived from the universal rights to life, common good which our people in the north are denied. Equal opportunities to work and earn a living and develop which comes from “our common father God who makes his sun to rise on both the wicked and the good and he gives rain to both the just and unjust (Mt 5:45),”<sup>9</sup> is for all Ugandans. The Church also has a role to play to fight for the rights of her flock and according to Avery Dulles,

The Church is the Church only when it exists for others. The Church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life and helping and serving in fighting against the neglect of people by the government and international bodies.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4. The Situation that Led to Creation of Protected Camps in Lira district of Northern Uganda.**

The camps were created because of many reasons, as given below:

The first and a remarkable one is that when the government could not protect people in the villages it forced people to the protected camps with the intent of better

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<sup>9</sup> J.B. ODAMA ( *His Grace Archbishop of Gulu* ), *The Pastoral Letter*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> A. Dulles., *Models of the Church*, 100.

protection. "This was intended to bring people together so that the rebels might have difficulty in attacking and abducting people from the camps and to make it easier to protect people in camps than in their homes".<sup>11</sup> This came about when the situation became out of hand and many people had lost their lives. So, the immediate response by the government was to settle people in protected camps.

The camps were created in Lira district after the parliament tried in vain to declare northern Uganda a disaster region. There are 29 camps created in Lira districts. The government soldiers as a way to frustrate the LRA from getting food which they could rob from the villagers found out that settling people in camps would be the immediate solutions. Also there was suspicion that some people in the villages might be coordinating with the rebels. So, putting people in the camps would help the soldiers to curb many evils.

### **5. The Situations in the Camps Themselves.**

The plan by the government to resettle people in the protected camps in Lira district is a challenging undertaking because of the sufferings the dwellers are undergoing.

Due to high concentration in the camps which is in itself an evil and violation of one's right to be in the camp in one's own country. There is poor sanitation and the water situation is very bad. During my interviews in the *Erute* protected camp one among many camps, one man, by name Peter Ogwang, commented "I live in a very

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<sup>11</sup> Dwon Lwak Magazine *Lira Diocese youth report*; Saturday June 12, 2004. 3.

smelly place as if I was not born by right to live in my own home. As if I don't pay taxes to the government of my country to protect me, ( Peko ame tye I Uganda).”<sup>12</sup>

Also due to high population in the camps, there is risk to contract diseases easily and there is not enough food supply from the government, to feed the camp's dwellers. Bosco Cweke a camp dweller said, “We are given only 3 kilograms of beans and six kilograms of maize for one month without any change of diet.”<sup>13</sup> So, there is no mixed diet and because of this there is terrible malnutrition in the camps. This situation makes many dwellers to long to go back to their homes besides the fear of being abducted. And many people escaped from the camps and went home and some ended up being killed by the rebels from their homes.

The international and national legal obligations hold the government of Uganda responsible for these evils.

It says:

the government of Uganda is held responsible and accountable by international legal obligations on human rights, in particular the international covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR) and convention against torture, and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment (CAT and CID). The government of Uganda and the LRA, as an armed opposition movement, are also bound by international Humanitarian Law that is the Geneva conventions and additional protocol II on armed conflict.<sup>14</sup>

This document above seeks to address the whole range of rights,

Art. 6 rights to life, Art. 7 Protection against torture and cruel inhuman and degrading (CID) treatment, Art. 9, 14 and 15 protection against arbitrary arrest, due process of the law. Art. 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 freedom of religion, opinion, assembly and association.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> P. OGWANG, *Security*, (interview)

<sup>13</sup> B. CWEKE *Food Supply* (interview)

<sup>14</sup> J. A.A. OTTO, *Human Rights*, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Annual Report, Uganda Human Rights Commission*,: Kampala; 1988, 59-60.

There is poor shelter. The houses in the camps are very small and in very bad condition and with big families it becomes very difficult, Santa Akello commented in Langi language “(*can ikan pet were*), there a lot problem in this camps”<sup>16</sup>. There is no privacy in the camps between parents and children. This is affecting the people’s protection of some taboos. For instance a child is not supposed to see his/her parent naked. The houses leak when it rains. Evelyn Jonga commented, “We are happy only during the day and when it hasn’t rained, we are rained on like snakes (*kot pwodowa bala twol*)”.<sup>17</sup>

Another thing which hurts many people is, arbitrary arrests by the government soldiers under the pretexts of being suspects, “And so many people are tortured in the camps by both the government army and the home guards (Amuka) when they return to the camps late at night like (7 pm)”.<sup>18</sup> This has curtailed people of their freedom of movement and freedom of socialization, making many camp dwellers to live in fear and lacking self-esteem. This is a bad violation of human rights. Mr. Jeremiah Ojok a local leader of *bar Ogole* village in the camp in the suburb of Lira town said, “We fear the government army than even the rebels because the army is always with us.”<sup>19</sup>

There are also emerging of some bad behaviors by the government soldiers raping women and under-age children. This is bringing a lot of fears of getting diseases like AIDS, gonorrhea and syphilis and defiling young children which is against the law of Uganda. Which Topisha Ekol a nurse in *Erute* camp said, “(*Jo ioko mito bin konywa*

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<sup>16</sup> S. AKELLO, *Population Concentration* (interviewed)

<sup>17</sup> E. JONGA *Housing Condition* (interviewed)

<sup>18</sup> *Rupiny*, (Local News Paper) May 6, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> J. OJOK *Relationship With the Army* (interviewed)

*I kom canwa iyi kema*), people from out should come and help us from this problem of living in the camps”<sup>20</sup>

The above is bringing more alarm to people and even to the international bodies working for the displaced like the UN, UNICEF for children, who don’t trust the government soldiers. This situation is making many people especially women and children to cry for their own villages. Agnes Karla commented, “Better we go and die at home than to be infected with AIDS by crazy and indiscipline soldiers ( *wekwa owot onekwa tungwa, I pekowa*)”.<sup>21</sup>

Another problem is the fear of being attacked by the rebels from the camps. Many people live in terrible fear because they don’t trust the government soldiers to protect them. This is because, “The memories of what happened on the February 21, 2004 at *Barlonyo* where 250 innocent people were massacred in the protected camp because of the negligence of the government soldiers.”<sup>22</sup> This makes some people to run away from the camps and go to sleep in the bushes or in the Town centre where the rebels can’t reach. There is also fear of being trapped by landmines by the rebels around the camps.

There is a practice of recruitments of child-soldiers by the government soldiers from camps’ dwellers. This is because there is a lot of poverty in the camps that children below 18 years think that the only way to survive is to join the army and be paid some salary to help their parents to get food and clothes. This too is against

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<sup>20</sup> T. EKOI *Help from NGO* ( interviewed)

<sup>21</sup> A. KARLA, *HIV/AIDS in the Camps*, (interview)

<sup>22</sup> *Monitor*, News Paper, February 21, 2004.

international human rights law. The government has been criticized about this but it refutes the accusation as false.

All these above are a big violation of the rights of people, starting first of all with bringing them to the camps yet they deserve protection from the government which they elected to power. Health care, food good shelter, good hygiene and water etc are basic needs for every human being. Without these a human person cannot live happily. Hence there is something the government and the society at large needs to do to improve the situation in Northern Uganda.

## **6. Conclusions**

Due to the situations considered above, there is need for, and responsibility of the government to take actions to curb this menace. Also, the Church has to see it that their work is to integrate both faith and good life among God's people. Moreover, the international bodies/organizations have to work integrally to ensure peace and tranquility in all aspects of human life.

## **Chapter II**

### **Theological Reflection on Violation of Human Rights**

#### **1. Introduction**

In this section I am presenting and analyzing a situation of hopelessness and I will cite parallels of violations from the writings of Genesis, the prophets, the Gospels, and the Church traditions.

The Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) rampage foments: hopelessness, loss of the lives, destruction of property, child abduction, the cutting of lips and ears, sexual slavery, forced murders, and forcing people to eat the flesh of one's family member. Yet through all these sufferings the believers in Jesus Christ with their hands tied and mouths shut in fear are still able to cling to hope for God's interventions in their situation.

The Langi people, while in this sad situation of violation of human rights, just think about survival and struggle to see how they will see the next day. Each attempted to bring to the awareness of others the horrendous situations which are caused by other human beings or by nature. The Langi people still feel that only God can change this. Christ's agony in the garden and the subsequent way of the cross which Christ suffered unto death serves as the ultimate explanation for their situations.

This situation, however, causes the Langi people of Lira to pose the questions, If God is omnipotent and benevolent, and how can such a God cause or allow these terrible human rights violations against the people he has created?

Therefore, in this theological reflection, I cited various texts from the Bible that help explain or appeal to the situation in Lango (Lira) which will be examined and applied to the situation of human rights violation. Next I shall try to relate what the Tradition of the Church has to say about the rights of human beings in the eyes of God. Finally, the violations will be seen as evil against the Langi because all people are God's creation.

## **2. Theology of Human Rights**

Before I reflect on the biblical foundation of human rights, I want to share the fundamental theology of human rights. Human beings, who are created in the image of God, are called to enjoy communion and to exercise stewardship with each other. Therefore, the activities entailed by interpersonal communion and responsible stewardship engage the total person: the spiritual and corporeal. Hence human beings need to share a world with each other. "Implicit in the Catholic theology of the *imago Dei* (God's Image) is the profound truth that the material world creates the conditions for engagement of human persons with one another. In these interactions human rights and dignity are entrenched within".<sup>23</sup> Since God created every human being for himself, he gave all of them rights to live and to enjoy interaction, protection, love and responsibility of stewardship towards one another. The scripture explains it in a better

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<sup>23</sup>Origins, CNS Documentary Service, *International Theological Commission, Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*: September 23, 2004. XXXIV, (no. 15), 242.



way for us to understand the intention of God for every human being in this universe. That is why the writer of the book of Genesis said that God created man and blessed him to multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. It was with this intention therefore that man should live in peace and in dignity. God's intention of love for all human beings is why he sent his only son Jesus Christ to die for all mankind. Therefore God's intention for human rights need not be governed merely by a few men. The Langi people of Lira, therefore, cry day and night for protection and for their rights and dignity as human being to be kept by the government of Uganda and the international bodies.

### **3. Theology of Old Testament on Human Rights**

In the book of Genesis, God created male and female in his own image and likeness. This brings a presumption that all human beings have the first and fundamental right to life. No human being has a right to deprive another of this fundamental right except God himself who is the originator of life and to take life belongs to him alone.

God created man to share in his goodness. "God is goodness itself and he created man to share in his goodness, to manifest God's goodness by making others around him/her happy."<sup>24</sup> This is because God created us so that we may be happy in his goodness and to manifest the happiness of God to each other. This is a very important gift given to humanity by God who should reciprocate it to one another as a way of appreciation of God's favor to it.

Man is distinct from the rest of creation in that, "he was created by a special and a solemn divine counsel (Gen 1:20). Man's creation was an immediate act of God. He

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<sup>24</sup> H. R. LAIRD - A. L. GLEASON - W. K. (Jr). BRUCE, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 13.

was created after the divine attribute. He was created with two distinct elements of decision and responsibility”<sup>25</sup> (Gen.2:7). This difference guaranteed man of another treatment different from other creatures by God and his fellow men. God breathed into his nostrils and placed him in an exalted position (Gen 1:28), that is to continue God’s creative act. Man is, therefore, intended by God to be responsible for his fellow man. The Langi lack this attention of love from their fellow brothers and sisters nationally and internationally.

The name Adam connotes man in the image of God as to soul or spirit, indicating man’s essential simplicity, spirituality, indivisibility, immortality and physical power or faculties of intellect and will with their functions. This calls man to be responsible to one another and to nature. All these show that all men are created with the same ultimate rights.

The author of “theological Wordbook of the Old Testament,” says, “God’s image in man refers to the man’s exceptional relationship with God. This means that man is a creature who hears the word of God speaks to God in prayer and obeys him in service.”<sup>26</sup> This therefore ties man to responsibility of his actions. God created us to serve him and one another. Therefore, it is the duty of society to see that this responsibility to recreate and participate in God’s works and service is effected.

The image of God according to Payne refers to man as a rational-moral creature, and he says, “Man alone is responsible for his decision, he determines his destiny by

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<sup>25</sup> H.R. LAIRD, *Theological*,14.

<sup>26</sup> H. R. LAIRD,*Theological*,15.

volitional choice, and only man is judged as righteous or sinful by God's law.<sup>27</sup> Human beings are free to make choices to do the right thing or to do the wrong thing but the choices remain personal. However, from God's side we are always expected to do as God does, to be good as our heavenly Father is.

Another Biblical theology school holds that, "the Divine likeness refers to the whole dignity of man in virtue of which human nature is sharply distinguished from that of the beasts. Man as a free being is set over nature and designed to hold communication with God, and to be his representative on earth."<sup>28</sup> Man therefore is to represent God responsibly on earth. This is a big role for man to play, which is given by God himself. This is a role which is to be manifested by all and to all because God created all people in his own image to be loved and respected.

Another Old Testament scholar Payne remarks that, 'the term image and likeness connotes freedom and blessedness, as it reflects man's cosmic, ethical and beneficent sovereignty of the testator himself.' The Divine image thus implies all the various aspects of God's reflected glory and honor, which in summary is the totality of man's higher power that distinguishes him from brute's creation. Hence this image should be safeguarded sparingly.<sup>29</sup>

The second accounts of creation in Genesis makes it clear that man is not created as an isolated individual: 'God created mankind in his image, in his image he created them, male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27). This action of God presupposes responsibility. "God placed the first human beings in relation to one another, each with a partner of the other sex."<sup>30</sup> This implies God's intention of creating man with dignity and rights of love and protection and responsibility.

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<sup>27</sup> H.R. LAIRD, *Theological*, 17.

<sup>28</sup> H. R.LAIRD, *Theological*, 18.

<sup>29</sup> H.R. LAIRD, *Theological*, 19.

<sup>30</sup> *Origins CNSe International Theological Commission*,. 15.

#### 4. Prophets on Human Rights.

The postexilic prophets came to address the situations of war and suffering in two different ways. One is to challenge the leaders to make a better address in the situation of people and also to bring hope and solace to those suffering and in the case of Lira people for leaders to address the terrible human right violations in the region. The prophets are crying for the well-being of everybody in the community, that is to make God's love be experienced by all who are created in the image of God.

Secondly, the prophets challenged leaders of their time to listen and act to the evil of corruption which the leaders were enjoying (Amos 8:4-7), for they look but seem not to perceive the sufferings of the poor. Also, the Prophet Isaiah says, "Evil makes these people dumb and keeps their ears shut and cover their eyes from seeing with their own eyes the suffering of my people,"<sup>31</sup> (Is. 6:9-10). Here Prophet Isaiah reminded the leaders and society of their ultimate responsibilities.

The postexilic prophets talk about justice as the way to know God. They said, "Justice is not just a philosophical term, but it is rooted in the knowledge of Israel's God, a God who is just and requires justice. This, therefore, involves the fulfilling of responsibilities which creates better relationships between rulers and people, citizens and aliens, priests and congregation"<sup>32</sup> (Is. 1:21-22). The prophets are looking for leaders who stand up for the welfare of their people. In the same aspect Prophet Jeremiah says, "Justice is not utopian dream to be achieved at some distant time to come; it must be expressed now in the concrete socio-political, economic decisions of

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<sup>31</sup> E. SCHULLER, *Post-Exilic Prophets*, 117.

<sup>32</sup> E. SCHULLER., *Post-Exilic Prophets*, 117.

society. Jeremiah called for peace and justice to the King of the Near East,"<sup>33</sup> (Jer.22:15-17). This is a call to our leaders today to address the flight of the people and provide protection.

The prophets, besides the sufferings and marginalization of people gave some hope to the suffering people (Is.61:1-2), and said," Jesus who is the King of peace will proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."<sup>34</sup> This peace foreshadowed the New Testament Saviour Jesus of Nazareth, who would bring peace and break all divisions among all people.

The Prophet Ezekiel (3:1-4) proclaimed home-coming from exile. He said "Believe in the actions of God. It is the wind of God that creates a new future. He also gives people the message of hope, as a sign of justice. I will take you from the nations, I will gather you, I will bring you to your own land, and I will sprinkle clean water over you and cleanse you,"<sup>35</sup> (Ez.36:24-30). Israel is made to live in the presence of God. In the promise through the Prophet Ezekiel, "A new heart I will put in you and a new spirit I will put in you. Take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh that can love and forgive, and I will put my spirit within you."<sup>36</sup> God promised people to live in love and trust each other.

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<sup>33</sup> E. SCHULLER., *Post-Exilic Prophets*, 177.

<sup>34</sup> E. SCHULLER, *Post-Exilic Prophets*, 118.

<sup>35</sup> E. SCHULLER, *Post-Exilic Prophets*, 118.

<sup>36</sup> E. SCHULLER, *Post-Exilic Prophets*, 119.

## **5. Conclusion**

The Old Testament has presented the intention of God's creation and urges that human rights be entrenched in human beings because he created man out of his own will and therefore man's dignity should be the first thing to do in order to show God's respect and service. The writings of the prophets help us to understand that justice is the way to know God. The Prophet Isaiah tells us that a God who is just requires justice. The prophet also gave hope for the people. Therefore, in a situation of injustice and neglect, we should always hope that God has not left us alone, but cares and will always come to our help.

## **6. Application of Old Testament to Human Rights**

The people of Langi like any other persons in Uganda have rights to life which is a fundamental gift from God. Since God created us with a purpose, we are uniquely created with a responsibility to love and care for each other. Therefore, the government of Uganda has the responsibility to provide security to all Ugandans of all regions of the country. The government of Uganda like the man in the Gospel is given more talents and more is expected of him(Lk. 19:26).

Likewise, the LRA made irresponsible acts for which they are to be held accountable. They have disfigured the image of God by killing innocent people of northern Uganda. The right to give and to take away life belongs to God alone. The government and the LRA must learn that all human life deserves to be respected.

Man as a free being is set over nature and designed to hold communication with God and to be representative of Uganda on earth. With this statement, "the government of Uganda as a representative has a sovereign authority and duty to protect the rights

and dignity of innocent children who are being abducted by the LRA rebels and many other people who are burnt alive in “*Barlonyo*” camps in Lira in northern Uganda.”<sup>37</sup>

God created man with freedom of movement and speech. Now the situation in the northern Uganda curtails most people's freedom of movement. In the protected camps people are not allowed to move out of the camps in certain hours of the evenings or else they are tortured or raped by the government soldiers.

Those who have experienced neglect and innocent suffering might perceive God as unjust. This kind of accusation of God has an eschatological overtone. God's justice can only be attained if there is a sufficient reason why God allows it. The author of long Essay the 'The Suffering of the Acholli of people', Asimwe B. Erog, quoted the Book of Job and said, "There must be some reason for sufferings."<sup>38</sup> The human neglect and violation of the Langi people still remains unexplained, but they may still come to understand that God is he who is always righteous and just. His designs are mysterious. He goes beyond our human and intellectual explanation. However, the Langi people believe that God has spoken to them as he did to Job. Like Job they have laid their hope in God's plan. This encounter and hope has invested the Langi people with a new dignity and honour.

## **7. New Testament on Human Rights**

The teaching of Jesus gives a profound and fuller understanding of the New Testament on human rights. Jesus was a refugee during his early life. His parents fled into Egypt because of the fear of Herod who wanted to kill him. During his public

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<sup>37</sup> *A Memorandum to the Right Honourable Speaker and Honourable Members of Parliament of Uganda by the Association of Religious in Uganda*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> A. B. EROGI, C.S.C. *The Suffering of the Acholi People*, 32.

ministry, Jesus attacked the use of the law by the scribes who ignore the rights of women. He died on the cross to show his great love for those whose rights are violated. Jesus chooses to be killed so as to challenge the existing system.

#### **8. Theology of Human Rights in the Gospels.**

In the New Testament Jesus defended the rights of the marginalized in the Jewish community. "In John's Gospel, Jn. 8:7-11 Jesus saved the life of the powerless woman. He asked those who had not sinned to throw the first stone to kill her. Here Jesus shows that his mission was for those who were in need."<sup>39</sup>

Saint Luke presents Jesus in the synagogue as in a conflict with the Pharisees as he cures a woman on a Sabbath day which for the Jews law is not acceptable (Lk 13:10-17). This Jesus wants to show the Pharisees that even, "the poor woman deserves life since she is a creature of God."<sup>40</sup>

In the beatitudes Matthew talks of peacemaking. The idea of peace (shalom) is the fullness of God's gifts. Although in the fuller sense, the real peace will be realized in the kingdom of God. Jesus here demands the pursuit of peace. Jesus himself said 'I came so that you can have life' (Jn10:10). That is life built on peace; Jesus therefore, looked first at the good of people.

Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted (Mt 5:4). The writer wants to tell us that God will show his mercy towards those who are neglected. This is the reason for which he came to bring joy to those whose rights are

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<sup>39</sup> W. BARKLAY, *The Gospel of John*, (Revised Edition), 7.

<sup>40</sup> M. MCKENNA, *Blessings and Woes, The Beatitudes and The Sermon on The Plain in the Gospel of Luke*, 148.



violated and whose dignity is not respected. This means that God does not leave his people to suffer but comforts them.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, the good news of the kingdom of God proclaims salvation for God's people. He also proclaims how this salvation is manifested to us, through liberation and the provision of justice. "In the beatitudes Jesus addresses people with the eschatological proclamation of the salvation of all his people that is the kingdom of God. He said blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Mt 5:3-4)"<sup>41</sup>.

"The New Testament presents Jesus as a liberator and a comforter of those whose rights are violated and marginalized as quoted before (Jn 8:11). Neither will I condemn you, he told the woman."<sup>42</sup> As second Isaiah states that suffering and endurance are a great encouragement for all believers in God's intervention in their situation. "We see in the Gospel Jesus' suffering on the cross, he did not long to revenge his torturers but he forgave them. On the cross he said, Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing "<sup>43</sup>(Lk.23:34). Jesus' reaction shows a reaction of non-violence. The Langi, therefore, should not try to revenge against the Acholi people, but imitate Jesus' example.

In the New Testament, especially in the Gospels, Jesus gives a profound explanation of the New Testament's understanding of the importance of human life. His own suffering passion, death for the salvation of sinners becomes the way through

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<sup>41</sup>.D. J. HARRINGTON, S.J, *The Gospel According to Mathew*, Collegeville Bible Commentary, 28.

<sup>42</sup> W. BARKLAY, *The Gospel*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> T.J. LUKE S.J., *Sacra Pagina, The Gospel of Luke*, 377.

which we grasp fully the real meaning of the injustice that causes suffering. By undergoing suffering for the sake of the many, Jesus brings a new meaning to human suffering and to justice in the world. Therefore, we see that God offers his life to regain his people back to himself from a world entrenched in sin.

Jesus in Mt 25:31-46 urges people of society to be responsible for each other. "Because when I was hungry you gave me food to eat and when in prison you came to visit me. Jesus wants to open our eyes to see those who are neglected amidst us in the society that we should have mercy on them."<sup>44</sup> That is the basis of Christ mission on earth as one who serves.

As Christians we live in hope for the coming of peace, which is the consequence of true righteousness and the right of a genuine relationship with God, and with others, and with the whole creation and with oneself. "This is God's project. For God those who work for peace, he makes them his children, because in peacemaking they imitate their Father in heaven, the God of peace."<sup>45</sup> Those who act as God does are those who act in favor of all humankind for love.

## **9. Theology of Saint Paul on Human Rights**

In Paul's theology, we have been brought together by the blood of Christ. He says, "In Christ you were once far off, but now you have been brought near by the blood of Christ"<sup>46</sup> (Eph 2:13). In his flesh, Christ has broken the dividing wall between the Jews and the Gentiles. He has thus effected peace by uniting both in one, therefore, all the people of God are united by the blood of Christ.

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<sup>44</sup> W. BARKLAY, *The Gospel of Mathew* (Vol..II,) ,324.

<sup>45</sup> M. MCKENNA, *Blessings*, 152.

<sup>46</sup> L. SWAIN, *Ephesians*, 56.

Christ is the peacemaker that is, "through his death, he abolished the law with its commands and participation as a divisive factor. So, through the cross he reconciled both the Jews and Gentiles to God in one body having put the enmity between them to death."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, through his coming and by his action, he proclaimed peace to both, to the Jews who were near and to the Gentiles who were far away (Eph. 2:13). "As a result both have access to the Father in the spirit (Eph. 4:4), Paul said one body and one spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call."<sup>48</sup> Therefore, the spirit is at work in the body of Christ and is active in the Church.

The Church, which is each one of us/Ugandans, has to provide and witness the spirit of Christ, the spirit of peace, justice, dignity and protection to all people of God. God is God of peace and his spirit of peace needs to be manifested in and among his people. Since God unites all people in Christ, he needs everyone to be in his peace and in the unity of the body of his son.

Christ's death brought down the law that was the dividing factor between the Jews and Gentiles. For Paul Christ died according to the law. His death is a victory to this law and his resurrection show the inefficacy of the law. By his death he annulled the law and abolished all the radical differences between men and at the same time brought about a new, profound unity between all men. Paul says, Christ is the one who breaks down, unites, abolishes, creates, makes peace, reconciles and brings hostility to an end. Christ has become the beginning of a new humanity, because he reconciled man with God and man with each other.<sup>49</sup>

For Paul, Christ has reconciled man through his body on the cross and also metaphorically through the Church (Eph 1:23). The Church has a very important contribution in the peace of the people of God and since, "Christ who is the head of the Church, in his death, he is the revelation of God's love that brought men together. For

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<sup>47</sup> I. HAVENER, O.S.B. *First Thessalonians, Philippians, Philemon, Second Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, Collegeville Bible Commentary*, 93.

<sup>48</sup> L. SWAIN, *Ephesians*, 58.

<sup>49</sup> L. SWAIN, *Ephesians*, 57.

this reason, Paul wants to tell us that since Christ offered his life to bring men together, man should therefore not divide and go against the offer of Christ."<sup>50</sup> Because by this union man is not just united with one another, but reconciled with God.

According to Saint Paul, "Christ's death is salvific or reconciliatory in so far as it is revelatory. It manifests God's love which in its turn, moves men to love one another and so participates in this love. It is in this way that men pass from state of enmity or hatred to the condition of love."<sup>51</sup>

In Paul's theology peace is *shalom* which denotes,

The fullness of all that is good, it is a perfect integration with God, others and self. Therefore peace is not just the cessation of hostility effected by Christ's death in verse 16. It is the complete happiness accomplished by his resurrection and communicated to the Gentiles and Jews alike in the spirit. Paul sees Christ as the mediator of the spirit, by his death on the cross he has created a new man (Rom 2:15). By his resurrection he has become not only a living being like the first Adam, but a life-giving spirit (1 Cor.15:45).<sup>52</sup>

Paul, therefore, says that all men have access to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. In this case, Ugandans have this same Spirit, and they should also live in the same peace of Christ. According to Paul, the essence of salvation is the realization made possible through Christ that God is the Father and that all men are his children. It is this realization that provides the only true basis for unity of mankind.

Lastly, Paul said, "Since it is Christ's image himself who is the perfect image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col.1:15; Heb. 1:3), man must conform to him (Rom. 8:29) in order to become the son of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>53</sup> Indeed to become the image of God it requires an active participation on man's part in the transformation of the world through love and protection of one another.

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<sup>50</sup> I. HAVENER, O.S.B. *First Thessalonians*, 94.

<sup>51</sup> L. SWAIN, *Ephesians*, 58.

<sup>52</sup> J. D.G. DUNN, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 97.

<sup>53</sup> Origins, *International Theological Commission*. 236.

## 10. Conclusion

Saint Paul's theology of human rights exposes God's plan for all people. He believes that nothing in this world can block man's salvation that is, neither law nor power or hatred nor death. For all these contribute to the destiny which we are all called to enjoy at the end of our earthly life, that is the glory with God.

## 11. The New Testament Application

In a situation of human rights violation the Archbishop of Northern Uganda his Lordship Archbishop John Baptist Odama responded after many years of sufferings and violations of human rights in the sub-region, "I feel the duty to send you my message of consolation well aware I am part of you all."<sup>54</sup> Like Jesus, a shepherd was concerned about his people, he said I am the Good Shepherd who lays his life for the sheep, (Jn.10:11).

The Archbishop has appealed to the rebels and the government to make peace by going into the bush to talk to the rebel leaders to release the abducted children and the Aboke girls who were abducted nine years ago from school and forced into becoming child-soldiers. It is like St. Paul who said, "I made myself all things to all people, in order to bring salvation to the suffering"<sup>55</sup> and to those, whose rights are violated, (1 Cor.9:22). St. Paul urged other people to be concerned about the neighbors around them and see that the mercy of God is shown them by sharing God's love for them in a situation of hopelessness.

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<sup>54</sup> J. Bt. ODAMA, *Archbishop of Gulu.Pastoral letter*,1.

<sup>55</sup> I. HAVENER, *First Thessalonians*, 88.

The Langi people of Lira suffered terrible violations of human rights at all aspects of life: the massacre of 250 innocent people at *Barlonyo* protected camps, the abductions and the killing of innocent children and the taking of some as child soldiers, especially Aboke girls in 1996. A girl shared how she was raped, "I was forced into sexual act under a tree in front of everybody because the commander said I was stubborn, and later I got infected with syphilis"<sup>56</sup>. In spite of all these, the Langi people of Lira seem not to lose hope in God. This teaches leaders in the society to keep watch on the sufferings of the people and not to be silent especially the people they are responsible to, as Jesus told his disciples to stay awake with him (Mt.26:38).

As Saint Paul said do not be ashamed or afraid of witnessing the Lord, nor ashamed of me a prisoner for Christ. This is seen in the fight of Sister Rachele, a Comboni Missionary working in Lira diocese, for her students against the rebels. She followed the rebels into the bush to ask for her students to be released. And some were set free. This is witnessing Christ to his people whom he saved by his blood. "Christ calls us to be his own people, not because of what we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace (2Tim.1:8-9)."<sup>57</sup> This human rights violation reminds the Langi people of the suffering of Christ. It gives them a spirit of hope springing from their trust in God who is a true refuge for all.

Archbishop Odama in solidarity with the suffering people commented, "Those who continue to attack us, our Church, our schools and our families are indeed daring to attack the almighty God and the saviour he sent to redeem us. In Matthew's Gospel,

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<sup>56</sup> Name Withheld, *Treatment in the Bush*, (interview),

<sup>57</sup> L. SWAIN, *Ephesians*, 58.

Jesus said 'do to no one what you would not want done to you' (Mt.7:12)."<sup>58</sup> This gives the Langi people, whose rights are violated, hope that God is on their side, fighting for their aid.

Finally, what I believe is that in situations of injustice, neglect, and suffering, God does not leave us to be alone; he will always guide us in some way to make us feel his presence and his interventions in hopeless situations. So, the people of Lango, though they suffer, God still loves them and will one day make them feel his full intervention in their situation of the violation of human rights.

## **12. Church Tradition**

The early Church Fathers in their teaching recognized that the dignity of persons and human rights is fundamental in the manifestation of God's love to all people. In the Biblical tradition, the Old Testament shows God's justice to the people of Israel. God's protection and his giving his people the Ten Commandments shows that God is a God of justice and love. The following sections present what Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul VI, Vatican II, and Pope John Paul II say about human rights.

## **13. Pope John XXIII on Human Rights**

The theology of John XXIII on human rights begins with the equality of everybody as created by God. In his encyclical *Pecem in Terris* he revolutionized the Church in many ways starting with the fight for the rights and dignity of all people, namely, bad leadership and warring countries. He sought for peace and justice for all people. He said God created all humans as brothers and sisters and has given them the

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<sup>58</sup> J. Bt ODAMA, Archbishop of Gulu, Pastoral Letter, 2.

positive fruits of creation and a common trust to be shared by all which is the fruit of peace.

The Pope reminds everybody that peace is a right from God and therefore should be enjoyed by all.

For the Christians he was very particular to the politicians that they fight for peace through spiritual weapons recommended by St. Paul with truth, heart filled with breast pate of justice and the spread of the Gospel of peace. They are protected by the shield of faith. He insists that such weapons ought to be the attitude of good Christians in the face of any event in any time and under any circumstances.<sup>59</sup>

He objects revenge and termed it as solving evil with another one, he said

The creator of the world has imprinted in man's heart an order which his conscience reveals to him and enjoins him to obey. This shows that the obligations of the law are written in man's hearts and their conscience utters its own testimonies (Rom 2:15). Therefore, all societal rights and obligations flow from the essential conscience of the universal law imprinted on each heart and imposes on individuals, the duty to claim those rights as marks of dignity and others have obligation to acknowledge those and respect.<sup>60</sup>

This is what the Langi people of Lira are crying for but they cannot achieve.

He said that civil authority must appeal primarily to the conscience of individual citizens that is to each one's duty to collaborate readily for the common good of all. Not for a certain click of people of a region of the country but all people of that nation. This is what the Langi of Lira are looking for in the Ugandan government. He says that love is the basis for God creating us in his image and likeness. He further commented, "All

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<sup>59</sup>JOHN XXIII., *Order in Human Beings, In Encyclical Letter, Pacem et Terris*, 4.

<sup>60</sup>JOHN XXIII. *Pacem et Terris*, 4.



authority is based on moral law and all moral law is ultimately based on God, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to you”<sup>61</sup>(Mt 28:28).

#### **14. Pope Paul VI on Human Rights**

Pope Paul VI in his teaching emphasized the idea of peace from the perspective of development. He said inequalities among people most often arise through tension and conflicts. In *Populorum Progressio* he reminded "The international bodies like the U.N, that the most important issue to be put into immediate considerations is the question of development."<sup>62</sup>

He urged the world leaders of the community to be considerate about the poor, the suffering, and the war victims. He said, "To wage war on misery and to struggle against injustice is to promote, along with improved conditions, the human and spiritual progress of all people and therefore the common good of humanity."<sup>63</sup>

Following the above arguments, he said peace cannot be limited to mere absence of war, but peace is something that is built up day after day in the pursuit of an order intended by God. This implies a more perfect form of justice among people, and for this reason he was protecting the rights of human beings as created in the image of God.

For him "the people themselves will not gain peace in isolation, but through working in collegiality and mutual support from the organizations like the Church, the U.N and governments. This is possible by establishing far-reaching programs for closer

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<sup>61</sup> R.G. MUSTO, *The Catholic Peace Tradition*.,189.

<sup>62</sup> PAUL VI, *On the Development of Peoples, ( Populorum Progressio) Encyclical Letter of his Holiness Pope Paul VI*, 51.

<sup>63</sup> J. GREMILLION., *The Gospel of Peace and Justice, Catholic Social Teaching Since Pope John Paul II*, 445.

cooperation among groups concerned with development that leads to peace. This collaboration on a world-wide scale can co-ordinate, direct, watch and monitor the order of justice which is universally recognized. Therefore, "peace is a mandate of each and everybody to foster to create a world of love and where the rights of persons are respected."<sup>64</sup>

Pope Paul VI reminded governments and the Church, "Your vocation is to bring not some people, but all people to treat each other as brothers and sisters in love".<sup>65</sup> This is the aspect of collegiality that is lacking in most countries, which misconceive the idea of sovereignty of countries. This has caused many violations of human rights because there is little collaboration not only among different countries but also the Church, which sometimes keeps quiet on issues about human rights violations.

He says the road towards a greater humanity requires effort, sacrifice, and suffering for the sake of others, and this to be done for the love of our brothers and sisters which will favor the progress of the entire human family.

He says, "As Christians we know that the union with Christ's sacrifice contributes to the building up of the body of Christ in its plenitudes, the assembled people of God".<sup>66</sup> We are all united in this progress towards God which will bring about respect for the human person and together join hands in fighting for human rights. It is time for all people to face up their responsibilities and do something.

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<sup>64</sup> PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 52.

<sup>65</sup> PAUL VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 52.

<sup>66</sup> J. GREMILLION, *The Gospel of Peace and Justice*, 446.

## 15. Vatican II on Human Rights

A theological analysis of human rights violation is found in the document of the Second Vatican Council because it shows the sacredness of God's creation and how God held man so dear to him as seen in Jesus' work of liberation. Listen to what *Conveniente ex Universos* (Justice in the World), says "In the Old Testament God revealed himself to us as a liberator of the marginalized and neglected, and a defender of the poor demanding from man faith in him and justice towards man's neighbor. It is only in observance of duties of justice that human rights that is imbued in God is truly recognized as a liberator of the oppressed and neglected."<sup>67</sup> Therefore, both political and religious leaders in Uganda have to show through duties and obligation that they too defend and provide security for its people as the God of Israel did for his people.

The Second Vatican Council says, "The life and teaching of Christ on earth has united in an invisible way the relationship of man to God and the relationship of man to other human beings. This is the basis of our Christian life of love and relationship."<sup>68</sup> Christ lived in the world a life of total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of men. So leaders and authority in our society should manifest God's care on man by fulfilling the responsibility given to them by their own people. In the Old Testament a leader was seen as the presence of God, and in 1Sam 5 King Saul was to represent Israel and defend them.

This is the attribute of leadership and Christian witnessing people should be ready to give themselves through their love for their fellow men. This is what is lacking

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<sup>67</sup>Vatican II, *Convenientes ex Universo*, 702.

<sup>68</sup> Vatican II, *Convenientes ex Universo*, 702.

in northern Uganda where the war continues to affect many people's lives. The leaders should provide security and help to instill in all people the sense that the war is ours and Ugandan's problem not just the northerners as it is being viewed.

According to Vatican II, "Christ preached the Fatherhood of God towards men and intervened with God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed ( Jn 8:11). In this way Christ has identified himself with the least brothers (Mt 25:40). In this case Christ wants all people (Christians) to act to one another as brothers and sisters and neighbors, and care about the needs of each other."<sup>69</sup> To this effect, therefore, Christ wants all Ugandan to know what is happening to their brothers or sisters and take an interest in it and see how they can care about each other's needs.

According to the Christian message, man's relationship to a neighbor is bound up with his relationship to God, his response to the love of God, saving us through Christ is shown to be effective in his love and service of men. However, "Christian love implies an absolute demand for justice that is the recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor, because true justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Since every man is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a brother of Christ, the Christian should find in every person God himself and God's absolute demands for justice and love."<sup>70</sup>

According to Vatican II the mission of preaching the Gospel today demands uncompromising dedication to the liberation of man in the present world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will never gain credibility with men of our time.

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<sup>69</sup> Vatican II, *Convenientes ex Universo*, 703.

<sup>70</sup> Vatican II, *Convenientes ex Universo*, 702.

Therefore the leaders of the Church in Uganda have to preach the message of Christ's love through and by dispensing and fighting for justice which is manifested through a commitment to human rights and the dignity of the people, without which our preaching is vain (*maneno tu*). "The Church has been empowered by Christ and has received from Christ the mission of preaching justice,"<sup>71</sup> Go into the world and preach the good news to the whole of creation, (Mk16:15). The Church has a duty to preach universal brotherhood and consequently the demand for justice in the world.

Undoubtedly, a very important role the Church plays in and among her people suffering is to act as a leaven in the world (society) in their family, professional, social, cultural, and political life. This means that they must accept their responsibilities in the entire area by following the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. The Church consciously promotes justice and development at the local, national and transnational level. "It is indeed constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel of the Church's mission for the redemption of human race and its liberation from oppressive situation."<sup>72</sup> Both in South Africa and South America the Church has contributed significantly to bringing peace and justice. Ugandan religious leaders have the responsibility of preaching the Gospel of liberation to the warring parties

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<sup>71</sup> Vatican II *Convenientes ex Universo*, 703.

<sup>72</sup> J .GREMILLION, *The gospel of Peace and Justice*, 447.

## 16. Pope John Paul II on Human Rights

Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Evangelium Vitae* emphasized and affirmed the worth of human person as being created in the image and likeness of God. Because of this, man's rights and dignity must be seen as God's will.

The Pope said, "Jesus the redeemer confirms human rights simply by restoring the fullness of the dignity of man received when God created him in his image and likeness."<sup>73</sup> On the cross Jesus said, "It's finished, and he gave up his spirit (Jn.19:30)."<sup>74</sup> This giving up of Jesus' spirit describes Jesus' death to ransom mankind from the death to sin and opens him up to new life. It is the very life of God that we share. We, therefore, have to learn to keep the commandment "do not kill", but to preserve human life and also to revere it, love it and guard it. In the Gospel when the young man asked, "What must I do to enter eternal life? 'Jesus said', you should not kill"<sup>75</sup> (Mt 19:18). The right to life, therefore, is everyone's right and Jesus urges all of us to respect this divine right.

The Gospel of life is both a gift from God and a task for humanity. In giving us life, God demands that we love, respect, and promote life. That is why the innocent lives of the Langi people of Lira are crying for love and respect of life in the person of the abducted girls in the bush or in the protected camps where they are dying of hunger. "God created us human beings as rulers and lords over all things but especially over ourselves and over the life we received and are able to transmit. Human Lordship over

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<sup>73</sup>J. DONDEERS *John Paul II, the Encyclicals in Everyday Language*, (new and updated edition), 267.

<sup>74</sup>J. DONDEERS, *The Encyclicals*, 267.

<sup>75</sup>J. DONDEERS, *The Encyclicals*, 269.

all creation is not absolute but ministerial,"<sup>76</sup> and to be exercised with wisdom and love. We are ministers of God's plan (*HV*). We are, therefore, to share in God's intention with love and protection. The suffering people of Lira are looking for this from their neighbors.

John Paul II said, "that life is sacred because from the beginning it involves the creative action of God and God's image is imbued in man through God's breath which put in man the divine attribute of God."<sup>77</sup> This, therefore, calls for divine respect of man's life which presupposes the respect of God the author of life.

He also said that Jesus laid down his life for us for our ransom, "so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters"<sup>78</sup> (1 Jn 3:16). This is what the people of Lira are seeking. What they encounter instead is suffering in the protected camps.

We are called to ensure the service of love to our neighbor, and to defend and promote their lives, especially when they are weak or threatened. The Langi people of Lira are in need of peace, love, justice, respect and protection, but what comes their way are threats of death from either LRA rebels or the government soldiers, and they are hungry because of the lack of food in the camps.

John Paul II said that we are people of life because we have been ransomed by the author of life. He said, "Through baptism we have been made part of Christ, and renewed by the grace of the spirit. But also we have been sent and as a people with the obligation to be at the service of life. Each one of us has to see that

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<sup>76</sup> J. DONDEERS., *The Encyclicals*, 270.

<sup>77</sup> J. DONDEERS, *The Encyclicals*, 271.

<sup>78</sup> *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response, a Pastoral Letter on War and Peace*, 76.

his/her brothers and sisters experience this."<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the children in abduction by the LRA, deserve protection. Therefore, the legitimate authority must protect the lives of these innocent citizens in Uganda.

Finally, the message of Pope John Paul II is to support life, to promote human dignity which impels Christians to respect life and to fight for human rights as our responsibility. God is love and he intends that all people enjoy this love which is being in communion with God.

## **17. Conclusion**

The life human being is held very important to God both in the Old Testament where the prophets challenged leaders about their responsibilities to their people and in the New Testament Jesus challenges the scribes and the Pharisees about their misuse of the law against the weak in the Israel community like women.

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<sup>79</sup> J. DONDERS, *The Encyclicals*, 281.



## **Chapter III**

### **Proposals of the Way Forward to the Violation of Human Rights Among the Langi People of Lira.**

#### **1. Introduction**

Normally, in situations of sufferings, cases of violation of human rights, and in all kinds of difficulties in life, people usually give into despair and say there is no way out! However, there should always be hope for change from the Supreme Being, God, whom we can turn to for help and with lasting solutions to problems. So, the way forward is not to leave out the intervention of God. Therefore, in this Chapter I am going to talk about the Role of the Church, Government, The Lords' Resistance Army (LRA), International agencies and the entire society to come up with lasting solutions to the sufferings of the people of Lira in Northern Uganda.

#### **2. Role of the Catholic in Regard to this Challenge**

The Catholic Church's social teaching is the conscience of the society. Therefore, her role is to educate the conscience of the society about the value and sacredness of human life. It is a challenge for her to design a new way of evangelization in situations of war as follows:

The Church leaders should be participants in peace building, and work in collaboration with the soldiers, local leaders and come out to foster peace talks that are

based on forgiveness and reconciliation. It becomes more powerful to preach and to act it out as ministers of our flocks. As St. James says, show me your faith and I will show you action, Js. 2:18.

The mission of the Church is to re-catechize the army on the use of arms and cultivate love rather than hate between enemies and among the defenseless. Therefore, the challenge of the Church is not just to sit and talk about peace, but to look for ways to bring it to reality. This is only possible by being a part of the discussion for peace, and in taking action. "We the Church should not talk the talk, but walk the walk". This is seen already by Archbishop Odama who tries to build peace by offering even to go up to the bush to talk to the rebels.

The Church should teach the catechism of neighborliness and concern. Therefore, Christians should be encouraged to take care of their neighbours instead of alerting charitable organizations or agencies. The Church should teach people to develop a spirit of community, brotherly liberation of each other and concerns for the welfare of each other. Pope John Paul II says, "no body is so poor that he/she has nothing to give"<sup>80</sup>. He said, the daring attitude and gestures of peace towards each other in the same problem is radiated to those who see from afar and may do something about it. The spirit of survival should be shunned and replaced with "ours," the sharing spirit.

Furthermore, the Church should encourage the creation of agencies to promote peace. For instance, "the creation of a Peace and Justice Commission at every level of the Christian community, creating specific services for reconciliation and conflict resolution within the Small Christian Communities and within the Parish

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<sup>80</sup> *The African Synod, Documents, Reflection, Perspectives; "An Analysis of the Church in Africa", 18.*

Mission."<sup>81</sup> Peace can only be possible by strengthening Christians to learn about peace building at local levels.

The Church leaders should try to make their Christians, society and the government of Uganda to understand and get their hands dirty by involving them in social justice that is non-negotiable. "It is the duty and the way forward in the building of the kingdom of peace. It is the participation in the work of God in building of peace here on earth."<sup>82</sup>

According to *Redemptoris Missio*, to be a Church of peace means, "To work with other religions and different political ideologies to build up a world of genuine peace,"<sup>83</sup> (GS. 92). The Catholic Church in Uganda and in particular in Northern Uganda can only become effective peacemakers by joining and encouraging other religions and political institutions and other groups like Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and international bodies in their efforts of peace building. Archbishop Odama is exemplary in trying to co-ordinate with the government of Sudan and the local leaders of the Acholi and Lango to bring reconciliation.

The Church through the Peace Commission should be committed to educate Christians in the art of dialogue, which is essential to build a culture of peace. The work of the Church, therefore, "Is to create an atmosphere of love, to build a Christian society where there is interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both

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<sup>81</sup> M. S. T. HYACINTHE; *The Contribution of the Catholic Church and the Muslims Community to the Reconciliation of Rwanda*, 38.

<sup>82</sup> J. WALIGO; 'The Synod of Hope' at a Time of Crisis in Africa, 206.

<sup>83</sup> J. PAUL II, "Redemptoris Missio", 152.

personal and social."<sup>84</sup> An example of this is seen, in the revenge situations against the innocent Acholi people living in Lira with the Langi ethnic tribe. Instead of revenge, the Church should encourage people to participate in the building of fraternal love, the transformation of attitude and the building of unity among the tribes in order to build one nation of Uganda.

John Paul II at the beginning of his Encyclical letter, the "*Humanae Vitae*", said, "The Gospel of life is at the heart of Jesus' message, lovingly received day after day by the Church."<sup>85</sup> So, the Church has the responsibility to spread this Gospel through all possible means. That is why the Church in Uganda has been one of the first in the fight against the violations of human rights in the Northern Uganda through building peace and harmony by following the Gospel message.

### **3. Kind of Catechism to be Adopted as a Healing Process**

A long side all these violations there should be a way to bring neighbors together. This can be done as follows:

#### **3.1. Forgiveness and Love**

The parties involved should develop an attitude of tolerance and a concerned approach to others and their rights in order to live without feeling threatened. "Forgiveness should be approached as a process to develop and regain the past experienced glory, (peace)"<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> M.S.T. HYACINTHE., *Contribution of Catholic Church*, 39.

<sup>85</sup> J. PAUL II, *Humanae Vitae*, 117.

<sup>86</sup> B. FROST: *Struggling to Forgive, Nelson Mandela and South Africa's Search for Reconciliation*, 110.

### ***3.2. Forgiveness and Healing,***

The Christian Churches have both a short and a long term role to play in assisting the healing process, at both the tribal and the national level. The Church, will then help the affected tribes to heal from the presumed neglect of the government, and the silence of the Church itself to talk earlier about this evil.

The Church should emphasize penance and the possibility of change through repentance to allow healing to take place. Also counseling and assistance to those who have been traumatized will help both victims and perpetrators to work through their experiences.

### ***3.3. Forgiveness and Repairing,***

The Church and the government, international bodies like the UN and African Union should help the victims to get out of this bitter suffering soon after leaving the camps. And victims should aim at forgiving and repairing the former relationships between tribes and the wounds of those affected should be addressed to heal the past memories, e.g., the abducted students of Aboke School.

### ***3.4. Forgiveness and Justice***

To foster healing through justice, "where those who were wronged are to see justice done by punishing those responsible of the crimes with the right justice."<sup>87</sup> So, the LRA leader, Mr. Joseph Kony, must be held responsible for his atrocities in the north against innocent civilians. The Catholic Church should build a spirituality of justice and peacemaking that emphasizes love not anger and revenge. This is the

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<sup>87</sup> B. FROST; *Struggling to Forgive*, 123.

foundation of non-violence and non-violence is the only option in the civilized world to fight and attain peace and calm.

#### **4. Role of the Government**

The government of Uganda (GoU) has sovereign and a constitutional mandate to provide protection for its people and in this case the insurgency in the North of Uganda.

Since independence in 1962, Uganda as a government has not yet gained independence from the British system of "divide and rule". The political leaders are still not independent and Uganda is governed or divided in a system of regionalism which has divided the country on tribal lines? Because of this, Uganda will never see peace if the government cannot find a solution to this. So, the government should create a political system which unites people and a language that unites Uganda as one nation if Uganda is to ever experience profound peace. This will make Ugandans live as one united country which supports and develops Ugandans as brothers and sisters in one nation.

Furthermore, the government should not underestimate the war as something it can crush within a few days as it was proclaimed by its iron fist slogan, "We shall crush the LRA and Joseph Kony within ninety (90) days."<sup>88</sup> This was not the case. Therefore, the government should stop politicizing the lives of its citizens.

Also, the government should not hide facts about the atrocities caused by the rebels. For instance, there were conflicting numbers reported about the people who were massacred at "Barlonyo" camp in Lira Northern Uganda. "The government owned

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<sup>88</sup> Justice Resources, *War on Words; An Analysis of the Newspaper Coverage of Military Operation in Northern Uganda from January 2002 to February 2003*: Kampala, 2002-2003. 12.

newspaper "*The New Vision*" and even the press conference by the minister of internal security talked of 50 and the local journalist talked of 250 people dead.<sup>89</sup>"

The government should allow the problems to be an international concern by not hiding the facts. And yet the intensity of the problem is an international concern. "It is just last year that the international bodies like UN and UNICEF started to intervene to bring food and other assistances to the suffering people in the camps after 17 years of sufferings from the LRA attacks and killing."<sup>90</sup>

The government should allow freedom of journalism. Journalists should report on the effect of the insurgency on the innocent civilians. But this is not the case. For instance, "10<sup>th</sup> October, 2002, the government closed down a private newspaper called '*The Monitor*,' accusing it of reporting false information,"<sup>91</sup> but it was later re-opened after the intervention of Ambassadors of different nations in Uganda, namely the Ambassadors of England, and the United States of America.

The government should stop intimidating peace efforts of religious leaders. For instance, "the capture of Fr. Carlos Rodriguez of the Acholi Religious peace initiative by the Uganda Peoples' Defense Force (UPDF) 4<sup>th</sup> division on Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2002, accusing him of not informing the government official before consulting with the rebel leaders in the bush,"<sup>92</sup> and also, firing bullets at the Acholi Religious Leaders of Peace Initiative supposedly being mistaken to be rebels by the government troops.

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<sup>89</sup> J. Resources, *War on Words*; 14.

<sup>90</sup> A Paraphrase from C. RODRIGUEZ, "*War without End*," *New People Magazine*, (May-June 2004), 4.

<sup>91</sup> J. Resources, *War on Words*, 10.

<sup>92</sup> J. Resources, *War on Words*; 8.

Also, consistent messages from political leaders about conflict resolution and the "Amnesty Act would help build community confidence and convey important signals to persons still in LRA captivity that they will be accepted if they escape and return home"<sup>93</sup>.

Government should make more efforts to rehabilitate the victims of rebels' abduction and children who return home. They need to undergo counseling programs, be given financial support to open small businesses or be taken back to school, or open for them vocational schools to learn some practical skill like building, to earn a living in society.

The government should prevent abduction by the rebels from the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) as it happened last year in "*Barlonyo*" in Lira district in Northern Uganda. People should be protected in the camps. If not then it is as useless as being in their own homes where they are vulnerable to the attacks.

The GoU and its leader, President Yoweri Museveni, should demonstrate good will to end this suffering and should, therefore, accept to have mutual peace talks at the table with the rebels for the good of the innocent citizens of Northern Uganda. This will show the commitment of the government to bring an end to the violations of human rights in the region.

The GoU and the Government of Sudan should build up trust between themselves and not support the rebels against one another. In particular the "Sudan

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<sup>93</sup>R.E.ANDERSON F. SEWANKAMBO – K. VANDERGRIFF, *Pawns of Politics*, 6.



government should close its borders from the LRA to hide so that Uganda government can get them"<sup>94</sup>.

Without waiting for the conflict to end, the GoU and local community leaders in the North should begin a process of national reconciliation through constructive dialogue, including participation by youth and women.

Finally, we should work for peace and use peaceful means for achieving it. So, both the GoU and the LRA must appreciate the profound teaching that evil should not be repaid with evil, pay no evil with evil (Rom.12:17). The only way out of the vicious circle of requiting evil for evil is to accept the Apostles' words, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"<sup>95</sup> (Rom. 12:21) because the ultimate weakness of violence is that violence manipulates the very thing it seeks to destroy. Hate cannot drive out hate but love and forgiveness can.

## **5. Role of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)**

Leaders of the LRA should demonstrate a serious commitment to peace by:

- Clearly "outlining achievable political objectives and cooperating with mediators attempting conflict resolution".<sup>96</sup>
- Negotiating and "implementing a ceasefire with independent, international monitoring of all parties and ending the practice of abduction, with the release of all abducted children and adults still in captivity".<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> R. E. ANDERSON, *Pawns*, 8.

<sup>95</sup> E. H. Maly., *Romans*, 100

<sup>96</sup> R.E ANDERSON., *Pawns*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> R.E ANDERSON., *Pawns*, 7.

The LRA and its supporters should direct their energy into non-violent political dialogue and work with organizations that address the root causes of the conflict and work toward the development of political structures in Uganda that respects diversity, treat all people equitably, and foster development in the North.

Finally, the LRA should use its spiritual influence to spread a message of peace rather than revenge and punishment, "In keeping with the core teachings of the various religions to which the LRA has appealed for legitimacy in the past"<sup>98</sup>

## **6. Role of International Agencies**

International bodies such as the UNICEF, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Human Rights Watch (HRW), UN, African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), International Human Rights watch (IHRW), World Food Program(WFP), World Health Organization(WHO), CARITAS, International Court of Justice, and now the East African Community (EAC)have a big role to play in a situation of war and violations of human rights.

Their roles are as follows:

UNICEF should increase its presence and engagement in Northern Uganda, with a focus on child protection issues. This will help to improve the dignity and rights of children in Northern Uganda.

ICRC and HRW should focus attention on its unique mandate for implementation of child protection under the provisions of Geneva Convention, especially in military camps of both the LRA and Ugandan army.

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<sup>98</sup> R.E ANDERSON., *Pawns*, 15.

The new AUPSC and EAC should give high priority to the situation in the northern Uganda and provide African leadership within international efforts for non-violent conflict resolution.

The WFP, WHO and CARITAS should always respond as fast as possible to situations of sufferings so that they may assist people at a proper time not 'putting on shoes after one has already had a thorn in the foot'.

Also, the UN should try to make all issues concerning human rights violations everywhere their own and should respond to this equally, whatever part of the world it is experienced. Whether in Africa or in Iraq, it should attract the attention of the world with the same effect because human life is human life whether in India, the U.S.A or Sudan.

According to the article by Acholi religious leaders for peace initiative (ARLPI), "A Call to Life and Peace in Acholi", January 2003, the group urged the international bodies to respond as fast as possible to the problems affecting people. This does not seem so to the ARLPI group. They complained, and this is what they said: "Given the seriousness of our situation we wonder why this great tragedy unfolding in the Northern Uganda hardly features in the international news. Two children killed in Israel will appear on the front page of all world newspapers, while hundreds of children killed in Northern Uganda seem to be nobody's concern."<sup>99</sup>

Also, international journalist should focus on the war in northern Uganda as they do on other parts of the world. The war in Iraq attracts attention from all over the world.

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<sup>99</sup> *War on Words; Newspaper Analysis on Military Coverage in Northern Uganda, 2002- 2003*, 1.

"The vocation of journalism should not be geared towards business but the truth and interest to inform the world of the evils in the society which needs to be addressed."<sup>100</sup>

## **7. Role of the Society and Uganda Human Rights Commission**

Our people who are suffering wait for the international bodies to come in and help to provide for food, medical attentions, and security. The Ugandan society has a big role also to play to help its own people as follows:

First, the government and the Church in Uganda should encourage local NGO's, and individuals to help the suffering people in the camps with food, medical attention rather than to keep on waiting for donations from outside which are delayed and may come with strings attached to them. "Ugandans must begin to do things on their own and must begin to think for themselves that means to cease to follow blindly the agenda set by others. They must bring fresh thinking to bear on every aspect of their lives, religions, cultures, education, economics and politics."<sup>101</sup> It also means that they must act now if Uganda is to know peace and prosperity. "Christians must take the initiative to help make the country prosperous not only materially, and culturally, but also spiritually and morally."<sup>102</sup>

Also, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) should try to be more vocal and to talk for the people to the government, to the Rebels, to the UN and also provide for the people who are suffering. Through this Uganda will be a country where every one cares for each other and all feel cared for. In doing so, Ugandans shall live by the saying of an African philosopher, John S. Mbiti, in his book "Introduction to

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<sup>100</sup> J. Resources, *War on Words*; 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Uganda Human Rights Commission Draft*, 16.

<sup>102</sup> A Paraphrase from A. L. Lando, *Peace Building*, *New People, Magazine*, June 2004. 28.

*African Religion*", and I quote, "I am because you are, and since you are therefore I am."<sup>103</sup>

Society should also support the government in its peace efforts to eradicate the war. This is only possible by the people informing the government troops of the whereabouts of the rebels since these are village-like conflicts. This will show the interest of the society towards peace and development.

The society should support each other in the difficulty of war by visiting those suffering in the camps, and in bringing them hope by their presence. This helps a great deal to bring solidarity to the victims to see that other people are feeling with and for them. This can be done through counseling those who are traumatized by the war, for example the students who were in the bush.

Prayer is very important for the victims. The society should put God first in the situations of sufferings. For in God, they find consolation and hope. Because most of the time, victims lose the sense of God because God seems to have forsaken them in their suffering.

Finally, the local agencies like the Uganda Red Cross (URC) and Northern Uganda Social Action Plan (NUSAP) should provide and foster better services to the people of the region.

## **8. Conclusion**

Essentially, the Government of Uganda and LRA should by this time make peace their priority because in 1984 it failed and again last year in December 2004 it

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<sup>103</sup> J. S. MBITI; *Introduction to African Religion* (Second Edition), 43-44.

was dropped. These big animals should respect human life as gift from God and opt for non-violence to end this terrible war.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

From our very creed, God is the creator of all things, a fact with biblical foundation. God is the source of life (Jn. 5:26) and love. Since God is love and man was created in God's image, man is 'most himself' when he honours life, and lives by love; it is in so doing that one acknowledges the creator.

Despite this, there are violations of human rights in our society which is a great challenge to the Church. Through all these, the affected look at Jesus' passion and death as a hope for the life to come. Both the Old and New Testament has shown us how God who created us in his image and likeness cherishes our life. He sent his son to free us from sin which violates our rights as human beings. Jesus who is the prince of peace brings liberation. The Fathers of the Church, Pope John XXIII and Paul VI testify to the importance of peoples' rights and this encourage all human beings to strive for peace rather than violence and they urge people to live as brothers and sisters.

As inferred from the Church Fathers, this violation of human rights in Lira is not a challenge to the Church in Lira or northern Uganda, but also to the evangelization of the Church in the whole country Uganda. Therefore, the Church as the first teacher of

society is to show this by fighting for the rights of the people and fighting corrupt political systems and demand they abolish inefficiency in the systems. Therefore, in this situation of violation, there is an urgent need for the Church to find ways to involve itself, e.g., lay leaders fighting evil in society. In the areas of evangelization, the Church is to involve lay leaders through the Small Christian Communities to help people who are living the camps so that the word of God may also reach them. Evangelization is not to be left to the ordained clergy only since in our baptism all Christians are made priest, prophets and kings.

For the government, it is time to work out peace, to wake up from sleep and serve the people who voted them to lead. The people need more than what is being done now. Good-will-government is needed than ever so that peace may come back to the people who need it.

To the society, it has to create a sense of responsibility, concern and love so that those living a better life may serve the suffering people in the camps in terms of food, prayers and all kinds of support. The Bishops of Uganda have boldly tried to defend the rights and dignity of all Christians, but more is still needed at this critical time where people are crying for peace in northern Uganda.

Finally, the violation of human rights of the Langi people of Lira and the tribes around especially the Teso, Alur is a breeding pot of hatred against the Acholi and has always blocked real dialogue and reconciliation among them. The new involvement of the universal Church may help Uganda's Church and the whole nation to bring unity.



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## Appendix I: Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
AUPSC	African Union Peace Security Council
AU	African Unity
CAT	Convention Against Torture
EAC	East African Community
CU	<i>Convenientes ex Universo</i>
GOU	Government of Uganda
HV	<i>Humanae Vitae</i>
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSM	Holy Spirit Movement
ICCPR	International Convention on Civil and Political Right
ICRC	International Committee of Red Cross
IDPS	Internally Displaced Persons
LC	Local Council
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NRA/M	National Resistance Army/Movement
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
UN	United Nations
URC	Uganda Red Cross
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UPDF	Uganda Peoples Defense Force
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UPDA	Uganda Peoples' Democratic Army
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

## Appendix II: Living Conditions in the Camps



## APPENDIXES III: HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND CHILDREN



Child Soldier  
Abandoned in the Bush



Children who must Act  
Like Mothers

## Appendix IV: Children who have Returned Home from Rebel Captivity



Statistics of the Number of Children returning Home is promising.

January	2004	111
February	"	110
March	"	218
April	"	112
May	"	113
June	"	136
July	"	131
August	"	151
TOTAL	=	1083

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