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Other than the editorial, the opinions in the articles inside are not necessarily those of Liberation.

In the context of climate variation, anthropogenic factors are human activities which affect the climate. The scientific consensus on climate change is "that climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities," and it "is largely irreversible."

"Science has made enormous inroads in understanding climate change and its causes, and is beginning to help develop a strong understanding of current and potential impacts that will affect people today and in coming decades. This understanding is crucial because it allows decision makers to place climate change in the context of other large challenges facing the nation and the world.

There are still some uncertainties, and there always will be in understanding a complex system like Earth's climate. Nevertheless, there is a strong, credible body of evidence, based on multiple lines of research, documenting that climate is changing and that these changes are in large part caused by human activities.

While much remains to be learned, the core phenomenon, scientific questions, and hypotheses have been examined thoroughly and have stood firm in the face of serious scientific debate and careful evaluation of alternative explanations."— **United States**

National Research Council, Advancing the Science of Climate Change

Of most concern in these anthropogenic factors is the increase in CO₂ levels due to emissions from fossil fuel combustion, followed by aerosols (particulate matter in the atmosphere) and cement manufacture. Other factors, including land use, ozone depletion, animal agriculture and deforestation, are also of concern in the roles they play - both separately and in conjunction with other factors - in affecting climate, microclimate, and measures of climate variables.

Physical evidence for and examples of climatic change

Arctic temperature anomalies over a 100 year period as estimated by NASA. Typical high monthly variance can be seen, while longer-term averages highlight trends.

Evidence for climatic change is taken from a variety of sources that can be used to reconstruct past climates. Reasonably complete global records of surface temperature are available beginning from the mid-late 19th century.

For earlier periods, most of the evidence is indirect—climatic changes are inferred from changes in proxies, indicators that reflect climate, such as vegetation, ice cores, dendrochronology, sea level change, and glacial geology.

Temperature measurements

and proxies

The instrumental temperature record from surface stations was supplemented by radiosonde balloons, extensive atmospheric monitoring by the mid-20th century, and, from the 1970s on, with global satellite data as well. The ¹⁸O/¹⁶O ratio in calcite and ice core samples used to deduce ocean temperature in the distant past is an example of a temperature proxy method, as are other climate metrics noted in subsequent categories.

Historical and archaeological evidence

Climate change in the recent past may be detected by corresponding changes in settlement and agricultural patterns. Archaeological evidence, oral history and historical documents can offer insights into past changes in the climate. Climate change effects have been linked to the collapse of various civilizations.

Glaciers

Glaciers are considered among the most sensitive indicators of climate change. Their size is determined by a mass balance between snow input and melt output.

As temperatures warm, glaciers retreat unless snow precipitation increases to make up for the additional melt; the converse is also true.

Glaciers grow and shrink due both to natural variability and external forcings. Variability in temperature, precipitation, and englacial and subglacial hydrology can strongly determine the evolution of a glacier in a particular season.

Therefore, one must average over a decadal or longer time-

scale and/or over a many individual glaciers to smooth out the local short-term variability and obtain a glacier history that is related to climate.

A world glacier inventory has been compiled since the 1970s, initially based mainly on aerial photographs and maps but now relying more on satellites. This compilation tracks more than 100,000 glaciers covering a total area of approximately 240,000 km², and preliminary estimates indicate that the remaining ice cover is around 445,000 km.

The World Glacier Monitoring Service

collects data annually on glacier retreat and glacier mass balance. From this data, glaciers worldwide have been found to be shrinking significantly, with strong glacier retreats in the 1940s, stable or growing conditions during the 1920s and 1970s, and again retreating from the mid-1980s to present.

The most significant climate processes since the middle to late Pliocene (approximately 3 million years ago) are the glacial and interglacial cycles. The present interglacial period (the Holocene) has lasted about 11,700 years.

Shaped by orbital variations, responses such as the rise and fall of continental ice sheets and significant sea-level changes helped create the climate.

Other factors are-

Arctic Sea Loss

Vegetation

Precipitation

Pollen

Animals

Dendroclimatology

Ice Cores

Nature triumphs over machine



UCATT

says

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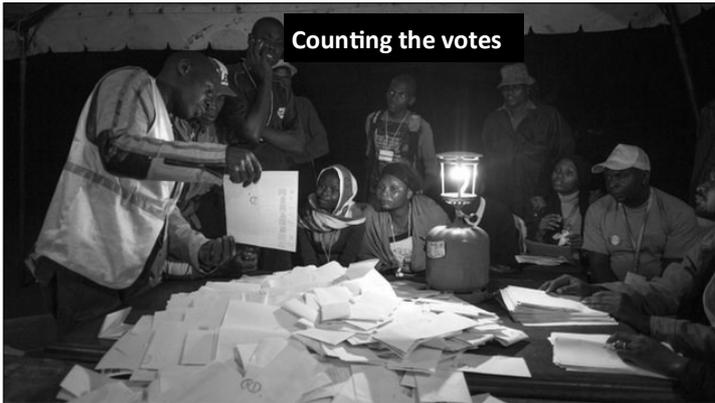
Out of the courts

Support ILO Conventions 87 and 98

Peter Kavanagh—Regional Secretary

Jim Kelly—Regional Chair

Kenya elections declare Kenyatta elected Dan Thea on a close run result



The recent Kenyan elections, under the new Constitution, were held on Monday, 4th March, 2013, and have received worldwide coverage.

The 45 million Kenyans, or rather the 14.5 million voters, were actually faced with six different elections: President, MPs, Senators, Women Representatives, plus Governors and Councillors for the country's 47 counties. The mimicking of the USA governmental structure is further confirmed by the replacement of "Ministers" with "Secretaries", who cannot be MPs. Out went the old British model; in came the superpower's version. Unsurprisingly, all the attention has been on the presidency.

Similarly, electoral manifestos have been totally ignored. Instead the reporting has harped on their sing-song of "corruption", "violence", "tribalism", and the International Criminal Court, (ICC), at The Hague. This court tries nobody else but Africans, in its service to the amorphous and notorious 'international community'. Actually, its cases are restricted to those African leaders particularly disliked by the 'international community'. Compare and contrast the 'international community's attitude towards the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Uganda, Rwanda, Tunisia, and Swaziland in recent decades. And, why are the likes of Bush, Blair, Sarkozy, Kasai and Netan-

yahu not before the ICC for their crimes against humanity? What about the Arab Spring, with Mubarak backed to the hilt, while Khadafy is eliminated? Why are the dictatorships, (feudal and otherwise), of Swaziland, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Tunisia, Gabon and so on befriended?

Is it not the same 'international community' that saw to the elimination of the likes of Patrice Lumumba in Congo and Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana? Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta and his five "Kapenguria Six" colleagues were arrested in a dawn swoop and exiled to the remote northern wilderness on false allegation of leadership of the Mau Mau rebellion, but of which they were not even members.

The colonial regime was simply obsessed with holding on to its cherished Kenya colony, baptised *the Garden of Eden* on the Equator, where the whites sat at the top of a strictly stratified racist social structure, while the "natives" were confined to their perceived proper place at the bottom. This was classical imperialism.

The arrest, imprisonment, vilification and exile of Kenyatta's group had the opposite effect to that intended by the colonial regime. He and his group were embraced by Kenyans as their leaders in the final stages of the struggle against foreign occupation, and were

voted to power at independence. It was, of course, in the interests of the British empire that it was the same 'moderate' "Kapenguria Six" group, and not the Mau Mau, who took over the reins of power. The independence 'deal' saw the Mau Mau being stitched up; and remained a terrorist "association" in the statute book.

The elections just concluded in Kenya appear to have had an effect similar to that of the Kapenguria Six scenario. The more the 'West/the international community' pushed Kenyans not to vote for Uhuru Kenyatta, the more the voters seem to have swung behind him.

Earlier in the electoral campaign he was behind his main rival Raila Odinga in the opinion polls. However, the ceaseless

threats with The Hague Court for Africans, the USA's threat that electing the "wrong" candidate would have "consequences", and so on, only increased the voters' resentment. Like all people, Kenyans did not like their decisions being made for them by foreigners, or threatened if they were 'naughty'. They rejected the deeply ingrained Western view of Africans as children needing close guidance on all adult matters. They ignored the proffered advice, and voted "the wrong way"!

In response to this revolt, the West has now resorted to querying Kenyatta's victory and to stoke up trouble for him at The Hague African Court. We are now bombarded with the claim that his victory at 50.07% was 'marginal', 'wafer-thin', 'slim', etc.





Raila Odinga

Yes, the official figure is reported correctly. But what does it really represent? It represents the votes that the winning candidate received in a field of 8 candidates. Contrary to what one might think, and how some have deliberately used it in order to mislead, it does not represent the gap between the two top candidates, as is normal in reporting a winning margin in elections. Kenyatta obtained 6,173,433 votes, i.e. 50.07%, against Odinga's 5,340,546, i.e. 43.28%: a majority of 832, 887 votes. This is a huge majority; not a tiny margin.

The Constitution requires the winning presidential candidate to score 50% of the total votes cast, (i.e. including spoilt ballots) plus one more vote. Kenyatta scored not 1 more vote, but 8,100 more votes. Additionally, the candidate must demonstrate wide support across Kenya by winning at least 25% of the votes in at least 24 of the country's 47 counties. Kenyatta achieved this second requirement in 32

counties, which is more than two-thirds of the counties. So, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission declared him the President-Elect. It is reassuring that all the observer missions, including the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, the Carter Centre, etc. were satisfied with the electoral process. More importantly, the Supreme Court validated the election, with a six member panel, presided by the Chief Justice, Dr Mutunga, unanimously dismissing a petition by the loser, Raila Odinga, to nullify the outcome.

The court unanimously dismissed all the four issues in question. It determined that the election was "free, fair and credible"; and that Kenyatta and Ruto had been validly elected and declared the victors as President-Elect and Deputy President-Elect in compliance with the Constitution and the law.

It is difficult to resist pointing out that these 'backward' Kenyans whom we so enjoy lectur-

ing on the importance of democracy produced an 86% participation rate at the polls; which compares exceedingly favourably with the around a third in the last elections here in Britain. Indeed, some counties saw turn outs as high as 94%. Seventeen counties, i.e. 36%, achieved voter turn outs of 90%-plus. The lowest achieved 65%.

What about the insatiable addiction to "tribalism" and "violence" when discussing Africa? The long-running land problems in Kenya arose directly from the establishment of the notorious "Kenya White Highlands", starting in the early 1900s when the first British settlers were sent off to farm the fertile, high altitude tropical lands, blatantly confiscated from their owners, just as in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Kenya was baptised a British "Garden of Eden on the Equator"; and one Government advertisement for would-be settlers started: "*Settle in Kenya, Britain's youngest and most attractive colony...*"

This British despoliation of land on a national, mass scale brought on the previously unheard of land hunger in Kenya. With the passage of time and a growing population, people were now continually on the move. Communities who had had little contact with each other before were now living cheek-by-jowl, and competing for less and poorer land. That was the genesis and core of "tribalism" and "violence", as illustrated by the competition between the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin in the Rift Valley region; and was the greatest problem independent Kenya inherited from the British colonial regime.

These two communities, Kenya's largest and third largest, were at each other's throats, resulting in over 1,100 deaths. One of the greatest failures of the five-year Kibaki/Odinga cohabitation government is that more than 600,000 of the 663,000 victims of the resultant toll of displaced persons still live in utter poverty in camps. (I am told, reliably I

believe, that virtually all displaced were Kikuyu.) The Kalenjin considered that the Kikuyu had grabbed from the departing white settlers land that should have become theirs. In the volatile aftermaths of the 2007 elections the Kalenjin launched a campaign to redress matters, attacking and driving away the region's minority and scattered Kikuyu, which accounts for the ethnic composition of the victims.

Remarkably, President-Elect, Kenyatta, and his deputy-President-Elect, Ruto, are ethnically Kikuyu and Kalenjin respectively. The reconciliation between them, and between their communities as demonstrated in the voting, should be welcome by all those with interest in Kenya. It is to the benefit not only of these two communities but also of the whole country.

Anyone with any decency, or any interest in Kenya, or in democracy anywhere, surely should be rejoicing that the latest and complicated election process in Kenya was peaceful; that the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission certified it as free and fair. Similarly, all the international observer missions, including those of the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, the Carter Centre, etc. equally assessed the election process as fair and free.

Western governments, in particular Britain, USA and in European Union are unhappy that their preferred candidate was not endorsed by the Kenyan voters. They need to learn that increasingly the world's peoples are refusing to be dictated to. Even the Africans!

With the elections over, Kenya's challenges are: (1) full implementation of the many progressive provisions of the Constitution, and (2) achieving rapid economic development together with job creation. This would support the country's commendable ambition to attain middle income/development status by 2030.

Dan Thea writes on behalf of Justice for Mau Mau campaign

Paul Kelemen –
The British Left and
Zionism: History of a
Divorce
Manchester
University Press,
Oxford Road, Man-
chester, M13 9NR;
2012
£15.99
Stan Newens
Reviews

This book is a chronicle of the relationship of the British left with the Zionist movement, which aimed to establish a Jewish national state in Palestine.

The Labour Party's attitude was first expressed in its *War Aims Memorandum* of 1917, before the Balfour Declaration in favour of a "Jewish home" in Palestine in the same year. The *War Aims Memorandum* called for an end to Turkish rule over Palestine to facilitate the formation of a Free State to which Jewish people could return if they so wished. The *Daily Herald*, the *New Statesman*, the left-wing writer H. N. Brailsford and, in due course, Ramsay MacDonald the first Labour Prime Minister, all came out in favour of a Jewish national home in Palestine. Poale Zion, a party committed to this objective, succeeded in persuading the 1921 Labour Party Conference to support the idea "not upon the foundation of capitalist exploitation but in the interest of Labour".

However, the British Socialist Party, which formed the basis for the launch of the Communist Party in 1920, denounced Zionism as an attempt to use the Jews as a means of extending British imperialism to Palestine.

These contrasting attitudes remained basically the same down to the post Second World War period. The 1929 Arab rebellion against Jewish efforts to take over their land and exclude them from employment led to two commis-

sions of enquiry which were critical of Jewish policies. However, a White Paper drafted by Lord Passfield (Sydney Webb) and approved by the Labour Cabinet, which proposed to slow down Jewish immigration and restrict Jewish land holding, was dropped after an outburst of opposition from the British Labour and trade union movement, supported by British Jews.

In their enthusiasm for the Kibbutzim (Jewish agricultural co-operatives) and the Jewish trade union organisation, the Histadrut, Labour Party sympathisers – with rare exceptions – accepted the removal and exclusion of Palestinian workers from all agricultural and industrial enterprises and the boycotting of Arab goods.

When the Arabs rebelled in 1936, British Labour leaders like Herbert Morrison and Arthur Creech Jones denounced them. The Communist Party, however, expressed support for them and, even within the Labour Party, Stafford Cripps and Michael Foot, who were on the left, opposed the refusal to recognise Arab rights. Alex Gossip and Lester Hutchinson spoke in favour of a Furnishing Trades resolution at the 1936 Labour Party Conference calling for unity of the Arab and Jewish peoples against British imperialism.

However, this was defeated on the grounds that the Arabs were being manipulated by landowners and moneylenders opposed to the socialist ideas represented by the Jewish population.

The Second World War and mass murder of European Jews by the Nazis generated immense sympathy for the victims of the holocaust. The fact that the Mufti of Jerusalem declared his support for Hitler hugely damaged concern for the Palestinians. The 1944 and 1945 Labour Party Conferences supported calls for a Jewish state and increased Jewish immigration, in complete disregard of the fact that Jews were

still a minority of the population. In 1947, the USSR reversed its opposition to a Jewish state and the British Communist Party came out in its favour, as well.

Ernest Bevin's policy, as Foreign Secretary, of restricting Jewish immigration met with almost complete condemnation on the British left and Richard Crossman, in particular, expressed a total lack of sympathy with Palestinian rights. The declaration by Ben Gurion in 1947, which established Israel as a state, was welcomed in the Labour Party, and even the Communist Party attacked the Arab military response resisting this as reactionary.

However, the hanging of two British sergeants by the Zionist terrorist organisation, Irgun Zwei Leumi, and their blowing up the Hotel David in Jerusalem with the loss of 91 lives caused an adverse reaction among the British public.

News of 300,000 Arab refugees, whose numbers had swelled to 750,000 by 1949, and the report of the massacre of Arabs at Deir Yassin led the Labour Government to press the Israelis to allow the refugees to return and to efforts to raise funds to assist them.

In subsequent years, however, the Labour Party was overwhelmingly supportive of Israel and, even after condemning Anthony Eden's Suez expedition in 1956, held back on criti-

cising the Israeli role. Two-thirds of Labour MPs were members of Labour Friends of Israel and victory over the Arab forces in the Six Days War of 1967 was generally welcomed. As a Labour MP at that time, I condemned Israel's recourse to arms in response to President Nasser's attempt to close the straits of Tiran. I remember the impassioned support for Israel on the Labour benches and the unparalleled rough reception given to my colleague Will Griffiths, MP, when he rose to his feet to criticise the Israeli action.

This book explains how support for Israel within the Labour movement has subsequently eroded. The Labour Government opposed the idea of territorial aggrandisement and helped formulate UN Resolution 242, calling for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories.

The Communist Party, while recalling the establishment of Israel with Soviet support, also called for withdrawal from the occupied territories. The New Left, which had come into existence after 1956, took a similar position and supported initiatives to back the Palestinians.

The Movement for Colonial Freedom, which became Liberation in 1970, also came out strongly in favour of Palestinian rights, although a number of Labour MPs withdrew their sponsorship over various manifestations of this.



Palestinian children under Israeli army control

The 1973 Yom Kippur War left more Labour MPs critical of Israel. The Labour Middle East Committee was formed with the support of 21 Labour MPs and I was one who participated in a delegation led by David Watkins, MP, which visited the Middle East and met Yasser Arafat.

The author gives a step by step account of how Israel, in subsequent years, gradually lost Labour support, although under Blair's leadership the Government pursued pro-Israeli policies.

In 1988 and 1989, however, the Labour Party Conference passed pro Palestinian resolutions calling for Israel to withdraw to pre 1967 frontiers.

Gerald Kaufman, who was never of the Labour left, besides being Jewish also took a line very critical of Israeli policies both whilst a Labour spokesman on the Middle East and subsequently.

The author of this book, who is from a Hungarian Jewish family and whose father sur-

vived a concentration camp, is outraged at Israel's policies towards the Palestinians. He has done an excellent job in tracing the development of the approach to Zionism on the left in Britain and his work deserves to be widely read.

Sympathy with the Jewish people, who suffered inhuman persecution over centuries, culminating in the holocaust, naturally generated support on the left in Britain for the idea of a Jewish home.

Today, however, there is increasing recognition that the elementary human and democratic rights of the Palestinians have been trampled underfoot in the ensuing process.

Implicit in this book is the message that we need to redress the balance in the interests of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples alike.

Without a just settlement that fully restores Palestinian rights and reverses the loss of territory since 1967, there will never be peace in the Middle East.

COMMUNICATION WORKERS UNION

CWU sends greetings to Liberation on the occasion of MAY DAY

Billy Hayes Beryl Shepherd
General Secretary President

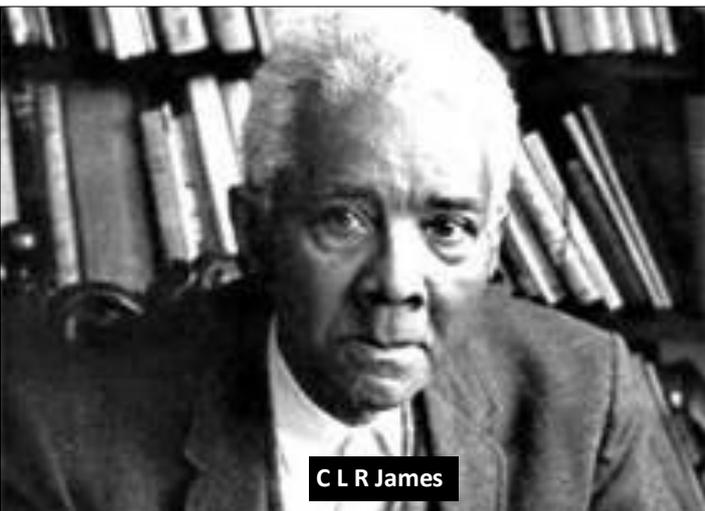
www.cwu.org

A History of Pan-African Revolt
C L R James, with an epilogue written in 1969. Merlin Press.
Originally *A History of Negro Revolt 1938*
James Grayson Reviews

CLR James published this shortly before WWII, perhaps during the twilight of the British Empire? The story of

history is narrated by survivors and official records can leave much to be desired. So it is in this case. The places covered include: San Domingo, the Old United States, the Civil War, the old colonies, religious revolts in the new colonies, the Congo, the Union of South Africa. Few authors are afforded the opportunity of a 30 year retrospective; James takes full advantage.

The book was republished during 1995 and this time in



C L R James

2012. Does it stand the test of time?

Some of the religious beliefs which are outlined offer insights into some of the eclectic belief systems subscribed to in different parts of the world. Segregation was an enormous problem in parts of the USA well into the second half of the 20th Century. 1952 was the first in 71 years in which no lynchings were recorded. The country imprisons a much larger proportion of its Afro American citizens than those of any other racial origin.

The British claim a better record than others on decolonisation; Kenyatta, Nkrumah and Banda were all released from imprisonment in order to head the independent states but they enjoyed a better fate than Lumumba.

During May the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the appeal of HMG against compensation claims from Kenyan concentration camp victims

A History of Struggle Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Liberation; formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom.
Stan Newens £3

involved in, in James' view, the myth of the Mau Mau.

Another perspective from the same era is George Padmore's *The Life and Struggles of Negro Toilers*, 1931, the Magazine for the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers.

Campaigning against the death penalty in Panjab India

Iqbal Singh on the action to save Balwant Singh Rajoana



At the 'door of No.10', from left to right: John McDonnell MP, Baldeesh Kaur, Seema Malhotra MP, Fauja Singh, John Spellar MP, Fabian Hamilton MP, Fath Yaqoob Khushi, Fiona Mactaggart MP, Maggie Bowden (Liberation), Iqbal Singh (Panjabi Human Rights Internet), Dan Jones (Amnesty International - UK).

On 14th March 2012 the Indian state announced that **Balwant Singh Rajoana** would be hanged on 31st of March. As a result of this announcement, in London, more than 400 people gathered outside no10 Downing Street to protest against this death penalty. The people gathered at this meeting formed an organisation Kesri Lehar (**Wave for Justice**) to mobilise opinion against the death penalty in the Panjab and the rest of Indian Union. Kesri Lehar also requested John McDonnell MP to place an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons.

Kesri Kehar was successful in obtaining over a hundred thousand signatures from U.K residents and this petition was presented to the Prime Minister's office at 10 Downing Street on International Human Rights day on 10th of December 2012.

The inspiration for signing the petition against the death penalty came primarily from Panjabi history and culture. When Panjab was a independent nation from 1799 till 1849, before the occupation by British imperialism, not a single person was executed by the state of Panjab.

On the basis of this petition John McDonnell succeeded in obtaining a Backbench Business Committee Debate on 28th February 2013. *Speaking in the debate against the death penalty*-**John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab):** A lot of people want to speak so I will try to be as brief as possible. We are here to celebrate the role of the Sikh community and the contribution that they have made to our community and society. It is also time to give a few thanks as well.

We held a conference in 1997, where we brought the Sikh community, the Panjabi community, together to set the agenda for sub-groups of Parliament and the issues that they wanted us to address. I want to run through a few of those and say thanks to a few people.

First, the whole concept of Sikhism is based not only on

community, but on family. One issue that we addressed was the inability of families to be united, purely because the visa system was not working properly. I want to thank those Members of Parliament and others—and the Sikh community overall—who campaigned for the opening of the visa office in Jalandhar and the work that was done to free that up. However, the issues on visas remain. We still have constituents coming to us who have not been treated fairly or properly, and who have then been exploited by agents as well.

Caroline Nokes: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way so early in his comments. Does he agree that there is not simply a problem with visas? A number of Sikh members of our communities have lived in the UK for many years, but due to the refusal of the Indian high commission to issue passports, they are effectively stranded in the UK and unable to visit their families in India.

John McDonnell: The hon. Lady is absolutely spot on, and that is one of the issues that we need to work together on. I know that members of the all-party group are working on that now. I have to say that the

new Government regulations with regard to students do not help, in terms of maintaining that flow and connection with the Punjab itself and the Punjabi community overall.

The second issue, briefly, is education. I am not a supporter of religious schools; I believe that people should be educated together, but I understand that while we have religious schools, no group should be discriminated against. That is why I supported the establishment of Guru Nanak school, the first Sikh school in my constituency.

The resources that have gone into it from successive Governments and from the community overall have made it, frankly, the best school in the country. The educational results are phenomenally good. In addition, the whole ethos of the school, thanks to the head teacher, Rajinder Sandhu, is that everybody is welcomed into the school. In fact, when my son did not attend, I got a bit of stick, and he did not attend because, if he had, I would have been accused of preferential treatment for trying to get my son into such a school.

The school says, "We open our doors to everyone, not just Sikhs", but in addition, "We send our students out into the wider community and we invite other schools to work with us." It has secured a partnership right across the community, and I want to commend the school, the head teacher and others, for their hard work.

On behalf of the House, I also send our condolences to the family of Poonam Bhattal. Some Members will know that the young girl lost her life on a school trip to Switzerland. Her funeral was last week, and her death has devastated the school and the wider community.

I hope that we find the truth of what happened to her. I know the school cared for her very deeply and that the family has suffered badly. I would like to send our condolences to them.

The third issue is culture. The point that came up was that we need to maintain the Sikh culture and the Punjabi language. How should we do that? One of the ideas was to use modern media, and radio in particular. One of the first community radio stations to be given a licence was Desi radio in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr Sharma). It has been a tremendous success, as a result of the community coming together and, to be frank, because of some heroes and heroines. Ajit Khera, who has been the chair of Desi radio all the way through, has demonstrated how a community can be welded together and how radio can be used, particularly with regard to the promotion of language and culture.

A number of historical projects have been launched by the UK Panjab Heritage Association. Many hon. Members will have visited the exhibition that it held at the School of Oriental and African studies and elsewhere with regard to the Golden Temple—the Darbar Sahib. I thought that what that did was

to introduce the concept of the Khalsa Panth, the Sikh culture and its history and achievements to a much wider circle of people than just the Sikh community here. I am very pleased that last week the heritage lottery fund announced that it is now funding the same group to do a longer project. Hundreds of thousands of pounds are being invested. The project involves working with schools and is entitled *“Empire, Faith and War: The Sikhs and World War One”*.

I sometimes get anxious about the militaristic impression of the Sikhs. The Sikhs themselves became warriors at one point, yes. Why? Not because they were imperialists or invaders, but because they wanted to protect the Khalsa; they wanted to protect their own community. They transferred that commitment on, into their commitment to serving Britain as well, and that was done in partnership; it never involved acceptance of subjugation. Again, I congratulate the association on the work that it has done.

One of the fundamental issues that has been raised time and time again with us is human rights, and we cannot avoid the issue. We had discussion after discussion about what happened in the atrocities in the 1980s and the injustices that took place, many of which have never been addressed.

I do not believe that any discussion on the Sikh community should not involve discussion of the need that there still is to bring to book the people who committed those atrocities during that period, because we have never found the ultimate truth and many of them have never been brought to justice.

In addition, there have been injustices here. We have mentioned the wearing of the kirpan and other religious duties. Injustices still go on. We still get individual constituents who have been turned away at the London Eye, from concerts at



Balwant Singh Rajoana with wife and daughter

Wembley and so on. Madame Tussauds was another example. We tried to ensure that at least some standard guidelines were issued, and to a certain extent, when it comes to public service, we have achieved that. The problem occurs when the individual private contractors are not taking note and not reflecting the culture of diversity in our society. More work needs to be done on that. I echo the point that has been raised. I know that the all-party group recently sent a delegation to Europe. We need to ensure that we are educating our European partners well on how to address that issue.

We had a debate in the House of Commons Chamber a couple of weeks ago with regard to the death penalty. I was impressed by the unanimity across the Chamber. We were saying to the Government of India, as a friend, respecting their sovereignty and independence as a separate democratic nation, that we urge them to abolish the death penalty.

We cannot be in a situation in which Balwant Singh Rajoana and Professor Bhullar are still on death row after all these years and at any time could be executed. I repeat to the Indian Government: please lift that threat. I have a final plea with

regard to Professor Bhullar in particular. My hon. Friend the Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson) and I are meeting his family tomorrow. He is very ill at the moment. I would welcome the Indian Government allowing independent medical support to go in to assess his condition and provide him with additional attention to ensure that his medical needs are properly addressed.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson) on bringing this debate to the House today and I concur with what he said. We are celebrating the achievements of the Sikh community and thanking all those who have worked with us to address the issues and the agenda that they have set with us. There is also a new agenda for the coming period.

A new generation are coming up, with new ideas and new initiatives that we need to ensure we can support. I am pleased that the all-party group for the Sikh community is in place. I am pleased with the work that has been done in the past by the all-party group for the Panjabi community. I pledge my support for that continuing work, as I am sure other hon. Members will do in this debate.

Iqbal Singh writes on behalf of Panjabi Human Rights Internet.

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How reliable is the investigation into Syria?

Rinaldo Francesca on the UN Commission of Inquiry



Commissioners Karen Koning Abu Zayd and Paulo Sergio Pinheiro

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva voted in favour of a new resolution on Syria in its 22nd session, which ended on 25 March; the resolution, put forth by Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and a number of Arab Gulf States with a vested interest in the fall of the current Syrian government, called for the extension of “*the mandate of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic [...] to establish the facts and circumstances that may amount to such violations and of the crimes perpetrated [...], to continue its work and to present a written report on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic*” in the next Council session. There are, however, some aspects connected with the Commission of Inquiry which might raise a number of concerns: namely, its composition, methodology and relevance.

With regards to the composition, one might recall, the members' number was extended in September, when the commission mandate was last renewed: alongside original chairman Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, two more members were added: Carla del Ponte and Vitit Muntarbhorn. However, the consistent presence of one

other, lesser-mentioned commissioner, Karen Koning AbuZayd, should raise a few questions.

This latter member, while having a more than respectable UN career to show for (first with UNHCR, then with UNRWA), also happens to sit on the Board of Directors of the Washington-based Middle East Policy Council, alongside current and former associates of the US-Qatari Business Council, Exxon, the US military, retired CIA consultants, the Saudi Binladin Group, and current members of the US government, as the organisation's website (mepc.org) nonchalantly informs us. In and of itself, this impressive web of interests linked to Ms. Koning AbuZayd should lead one to demand further scrutiny into the workings of the Commission of Inquiry.

As it happened, on my last visit to the UN in Geneva (when the C.o.I report was discussed at the Human Rights Council), few of the members states' delegates I spoke with gave me the impression of having actually read the report – let alone looked into the background of its authors.

Incidentally, the methodology and conclusions in the docu-

ments produced by this new commission (A/HRC/22/59 and A/HRC/22/CRP.1) do show a slight departure from their previous report (A/HRC/21/50), published on 15 August, 2012. For instance, while the August report did at least mention the “alleged” presence of unspecified and mysterious “foreign advisers” (paragraph 19) fomenting the conflict and supplying arms and training to the rebels, the February report kept strangely quiet about it. Rather puzzling, considering that such “allegations” are now in fact confirmed: indeed, the presence of CIA agents in Syria, supervising the shipment of arms to the rebels as far back as early 2012, has progressively become a well-established fact [1], shortly after the publication of the C.o.I.'s latest report.

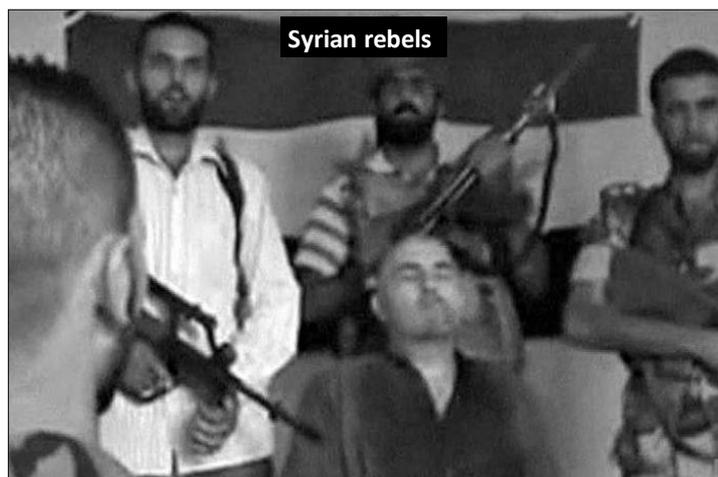
This is more than just a marginal fact, when one considers that supporting violence against another State through aid to proxy forces which threaten its security and territorial integrity constitutes a violation of the U.N. Charter.

As international jurist Curtis Doebbler informs us, an exception might be made *only* if the foreign-backed rebels could describe themselves as a national liberation movement, by showing that they were being oppressed to such an extent that the exercise of their right of self-determination made the

use of force necessary. This is clearly not the case, as opposition forces were repeatedly offered participation in the parliamentary elections, held on 7 May 2012.

They, however, chose to boycott the elections and demanded an unconditional departure of president Bashar al-Assad (presumably confident that their intransigence would be backed by powerful friends), and the August report plainly acknowledges that (paragraphs 14-20). So much for a “peaceful transition through the democratic process”. Furthermore, both the August and the February reports produced by the C.o.I. (which, one might add, did not set foot in Syria in either occasion) seem to suffer from the same methodological flaws.

Namely, the witness testimonies on which both reports rely are derived exclusively from interviews with victims, army defectors, opposition activists and members of the anti-government groups (paragraph 29 in the latest report even presents the accounts from a member of the al Qaida-affiliated Al-Nusra Front). Conspicuous for their absence are any explanations of the criteria which led to such a one-sided text. Also, the fallacy of the *Shabbiha* definition is reiterated in the February report, this time with the assumption of the reader's immediate recognition of that name.



Syrian rebels



Former coalition leader, moderate Moaz al-Khatib

It supposedly designates an armed group acting “in concert with government forces”, to the point of talking about “members of the *Shabbiha*”, as if there really was such a thing as a special government force answering to that name.

In fact, this fallacy was exposed quite plainly by a panel of delegates from the Syrian group (Reconciliation) at a side event which took place at the UN in Geneva on 7 March (*Syria: The Path to Peace*) [2] and further clarified by author and journalist Bahar Kimyongür: the so-called *Shabbiha* (sometimes spelled *Shabeeha*), far from being a structured and organised plain-clothes militia, or even a hierarchical criminal organisation (such as *Cosa Nostra* or *Yakuza*) is a loose definition which in Syria applies to just about any group of thugs, usually small-time racketeers

and smugglers. Since the beginning of the uprising, the label *Shabbiha* has proved to be such an elastic notion that the armed opposition has stretched it to define even vigilante groups which sought to protect their own neighbourhoods from the scores of armed rebels – many of whom had poured in from abroad – terrorising their cities. Scores of civilians have been murdered by anti-government armed rebels under the pretext that they were *Shabbiha*: to give one example among hundreds, actor and activist Mohamed Rafea was kidnapped and murdered by the Free Syrian Army in November last year; his crime?

He participated in an interview with journalist Lizzie Phelan, in which he denounced the violence perpetrated by anti-government militias. Perhaps the most worrisome aspect of both reports is how they downplay the presence of foreign mercenaries on Syrian soil, despite multiple confirmations of their pouring into the country from Libya, the Gulf States, Egypt, Bosnia, Chechnya and others over the last eighteen months. The August report did briefly acknowledge the presence of “foreign fighters among some armed groups” (paragraph 26 and 10 of Annex I), rushing to explain that none of this was verified or significant, while the February report noted that their number had increased (paragraph 27), with a conse-

quent exacerbation of the conflict (paragraphs 120, 134 and 168); again, this was followed by the caveat that their number was still somewhat trascurable although, apparently, relevant enough for the authors of the report to quietly drop the classification of a “non-international armed conflict”, which had appeared in the previous document (paragraphs 3 and 143).

In fact, Syrian government officials pointed out – as early as November 2012 – that the number of anti-government foreign fighters in Syria exceeded 10,000, according to conservative estimates [3]. In its methodology, the latest C.O.I. report does state that “*the [Syrian] Government shared a number of documents, including reports of investigations conducted by national authorities, as well as lists of casualties. Such information is reflected in the present report, where relevant*”. Apparently, the invasion of the Syrian territory by over 10,000 foreign mercenaries was not “relevant”.

Ultimately though, and more alarmingly, it is the question of relevance that seems to be most pressing. At the time of writing, several new developments indicate that the governments which have been clamouring for regime change in Syria since the very beginning of the uprising (with the United States on top of the list) might be considering a new, more direct and aggressive strategy to pursue their goal: despite

desperate attempts by these countries to portray the anti-government Coalition as a legitimate and unified entity, such as granting the Syrian National Council a seat in the Arab League, or establishing an embassy of the Syrian National Coalition in Qatar, it is becoming clear that even this latest ferocious coalition of loosely connected groups is increasingly a liability and an embarrassment to its international backers.

The resignation of its leader Moaz al-Khatib (which, one suspects, might be related to the listing of the Al Nusrah Front as a terrorist group), the horrendous murder of cleric Sheikh Hassan Seifeddin, the massacres of the Aleppo and the Damascus University have all drawn international condemnation: the fear now is that NATO might be waiting for the ideal pretext to intervene.

[1] **C.J. Chivers and Eric Schmitt: “Arms Airlift to Syria Rebels Expands, With Aid from C.I.A.”, *The New York Times*, March 24, 2013, on <http://ow.ly/jKdZU>**

[2] [2] **See Mother Agnès: “Listen to the other side!”, on the website of the Institute of Democracy and Cooperation, on <http://ow.ly/jKdW>**

[3] **“Number of foreign-backed militants in Syria exceeds 10,000: Analyst”, *Press TV*, 28 November 2012, on <http://ow.ly/jKdDp>**

Rinaldo Francesca researched tis article for Liberation.



US Secretary of State, John Kerry

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Gen. Bosco Ntaganda's 'surprise surrender'

Victoria Dimandja on the arrest of a warlord in DR Congo



Bosco Ntaganda

A Rwandan-Tutsi, veteran of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was made general in the DRC national army. The U.S. Department of State confirmed on Monday, March 18th that the Rwandan native, wanted by the ICC on seven counts of war crimes and three counts of crimes against humanity, turned himself in to the U.S. Embassy in Kigali, Rwanda, and asked to be sent to the ICC.

There are a lot of questions about whether Bosco Ntaganda is actually Congolese or Rwandan. He was born in Rwanda, he moved to Congo, then back to Rwanda to fight under Kagame in the Rwandan Civil War and the first and second Congo Wars.

The ICC indicted him as a Rwandan national, but now he's being presented to the world as a Congolese rebel. Isn't the most important point that he's been a Rwandan military officer, responding to orders from Kagame's military chain of command for the 20-plus years of his military career?

Ntaganda is a Rwandan military officer. He has been re-

ceiving orders from Kigali, from Kagame's command structure. There's no doubt about that.

Bosco Ntaganda's Surrender: What Must Be Different This Time

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has taken into custody war crimes suspect Bosco Ntaganda. He is the first suspect to surrender himself voluntarily to the ICC. Bosco Ntaganda has two ICC warrants (2006 & 2012) against him for war crimes and crimes against humanity, accused of child soldier use, murder, rape and sexual slavery.

He is the third high-profile veteran of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and Rwanda-backed militia leader in the eastern provinces of the DR Congo to have fled to Rwanda after having committed heinous crimes in the Congo.

Jules Mutebesi, formerly of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), did the same in 2004 while Laurent Nkunda continued the illicit Rwanda-backed network under the guise of the National Congress for the Defense of the People

(CNDP) in 2006.

In 2009, when global pressure built on Rwanda to cease its support of the CNDP and its leader Laurent Nkunda, Rwanda recalled Laurent Nkunda, pretending putting him under house arrest and replaced him with Bosco Ntaganda.

Today, due to pressure, Bosco Ntaganda has been removed from the equation and Sultani Makenga now stands to take Bosco's place presiding over the same Rwanda-backed illicit network that has been a fixture in the eastern provinces of the DRC for the past 15 years.

It is vital for the global community to understand that Bosco Ntaganda neither acted alone nor as a "rebel" in the sense that many portray him, but as a Rwandan proxy. It has been a common political tactic, on Rwanda's part, to install top military officials in the Congolese military. When Rwanda first invaded the DRC in 1996, for instance, it installed James Kabarebe as Army Chief of staff. Kabarebe, who is currently Rwandan Chief of Defense, was named in the November 2012 UN Group of Experts Report as among the top level officials in the Rwandan government orchestrating and commanding the M23 militia in the DRC. He was also responsible for replacing Laurent Nkunda with Bosco Ntaganda as head of the CNDP in 2009.

Bosco Ntaganda has been transferred to the ICC and many wonder what secrets he will reveal.

The fate of this individual and the content of his testimony during the trial may divert attention from the real question at hand: will the global community allow the Rwanda-backed illicit network in the eastern provinces of the DRC to remain intact? Moreover, both Bosco and Makenga took up arms against the Congolese people and Makenga is under U.S. and U.N. sanctions for the use of child soldiers and

other crimes, reminding us that the issue is not Bosco alone, but the network and/or system that produces the likes of Bosco, Mutebesi, Nkudunda, Makenga and a host of others.

The DRC's current president, Joseph Kabila, who lacks legitimacy, is complicit in preserving this network rather than laying the groundwork for peace and security in the country. He utilized the network to intimidate voters and appropriate the 2011 elections. Will he once again enter into a deal with yet another Rwanda-backed militia leader--Sultani Makenga--leaving the illicit network intact and operational?

Although there has been a recent increase in focus and attention on the region and the U.S. has acknowledged on several occasions the destructive role that its allies Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, Uganda have been playing in destabilizing the eastern provinces of the DRC, the administration has clearly hit the threshold of its willingness to hold these client states to account--a threshold that is too low to exert the pressure needed for significant change.

The U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, effectively reinforced the Obama administration's official stance when she recently stated that, while the U.S. recognizes that Rwanda has been "negatively involved" in the DRC, holding them accountable is "complicated."

Complexity is not a viable reason to continue "business-as-usual" when the result is widespread suffering.

Rwanda and Uganda, both led by strongmen and lauded in the international community, have invaded the Congo twice and consistently sponsored militia groups inside the Congo resulting in the death of millions of Congolese civilians, and yet the political will of the United States and the global community to hold them accountable remains lamentably weak.

Congolese people are seeking peace and justice. Trying Bosco Ntaganda at the ICC may lead to some measure of justice for the crimes perpetrated at his behest; however, it appears that his backers in Rwanda may very well be let off the hook yet again and allowed to continue their military aggression against the DRC.

While the drama has been unfolding in Rwanda, Paul Kagame has been on an image rehabilitation tour in the U.S., getting support from Harvard University, Coca-Cola, the World Bank, and long-time supporter and Civil Rights icon, Andrew Young. Former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair and Howard G. Buffet, son of multi-billionaire Warren Buffet, have been on a public relations offensive to cleanse Rwanda's image of any association with criminal activity in the DRC. Public propaganda and promotional appeals must not be allowed to cover for Rwanda's destructive role in the region. Though support for Paul Kagame and the Rwandan regime exists at the highest levels of government and industry in the West, volumes of studies and reports from 1997 to present have established the verity of their longstanding aggression against the DRC.

The responsibility of those working for peace in the region remains to acknowledge the body of evidence and to put pressure on Rwanda to cease its sponsorship, support, and backing of illicit networks in the DRC that have visited untold suffering upon the people of Congo.

When searching for solutions, it is vital to examine recent history for ways to avoid feeding cycles of violence. The Congolese government must not integrate the Rwanda-backed M23 network into the Congolese military as it did in 2009, which laid the foundations of the current crisis, or we will face a similar problem in another few years.

Militia leaders who have fled to Rwanda after having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in the DRC should face justice. Figures such as Laurent N'Kunda Bataware, Jean-Marie Runiga, Baudouin Ngaruye and Jules Mutebesi would be a good start.

As a result of the UN-created Peace Framework for the DRC, former Irish Prime Minister, Mary Robinson was appointed as UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region. As Special Envoy, Prime Minister Robinson can seize the opportunity to push for these other war criminals in Rwanda to face justice. This would send a signal to leaders in the region that the global community is finally serious about combating impunity and lack of accountability in the DRC.

Since President Obama's 2009 Speech in Ghana, where he declared that the U.S. was ready to support "strong institutions" and not "strongmen" in Africa, many have been awaiting this much-needed shift in U.S. foreign policy. Unfortunately, the declaration rings hollow, because, in spite of all the mayhem and suffering that Rwanda's strongman, Paul Kagame has sponsored in the DRC, he continues to receive strong support and backing from Washington and a plethora of powerful institutions and individuals in the West.

The arrest of Bosco Ntaganda should not be seen as a solution, but as a test-a test of the global community's political will to help dismantle the destabilizing networks in the eastern provinces of the DRC that produces the likes of Bosco Ntaganda.

Is US changing policy on Rwanda?

Let's not be fooled again. Nothing has changed. Only a different pace on the same path, the one of preserving US interests in the Great Lakes region.

Everything started with the report published by the UN

group of experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo back in June last year. The team had shown evidence of the Rwandan interference in Congolese affairs through comprehensive support of yet another rebellion in DRC – M23.

The ultimate objective aimed at has always been to plunder DRC resources. And this has not stopped. Humanitarian consequences have been so far more than 8 million dead, 2 million displaced and 1 million of women raped. After M23 and its Rwandan and Ugandan backers forced the DRC government into negotiations, this following the 10 days occupation of Goma in November 2012, the January 24th Peace Framework signed in Addis Abeba brought a new dimension to the Congolese conflict.

Another element into the Congolese conflict-puzzle was the fact that Rwanda has a seat among the 15 members of the UN Security Council since January 1st. For that reason, Paul Kagame's government has to change its behavior in Eastern Congo. Though being certainly difficult for an institution founded on lies as policies, it has to adapt because it is being more closely monitored than before.

Many have argued that by accepting Rwanda at the UNSC, that in itself has lowered the seriousness and or integrity left to that institution, knowing well how Paul Kagame's government is unworthy of such privilege because of its significant responsibility in the instability of the Great Lakes region for almost 20 years.

Barack Obama being in his last term, can people from DRC, Rwanda and even Uganda hope that the victims of Kagame and Museveni will see some change in US foreign policy towards the region? Unfortunately they cannot. And they shouldn't. They have lost too much during the last 20 years because of the American attitude. It would be irrational on their part to believe

otherwise. Congolese, Rwandans and Ugandans' liberation from their respective dictatorships depends on them and nobody else. If US foreign policy has not changed the question would be why now getting hands on one of the criminals involved in DRC?

Did Bosco Ntaganda go really to US Embassy in Rwanda by himself? It is all manipulation. The same way there hasn't been any fighting between the so-called 2 sides inside M23, despite what mainstream media have made everybody to believe. Joseph Kabila's recent visit in Kampala and the agreement to include General Sultan Makenga with his militias into the DRC national army are all parts of the same politics. Ending honourably the insurrection of M23 was part of the equation.

But what continues to be the fate of Nkundabware and Makenga who are both under international warrants? The latter gets some promotion inside FARDC. The former is still enjoying Kagame's hospitality. What about the other criminals from the region all wanted by international jurisdictions? If US have ever been on the side of the victims, unless it stops from working with the Kagame or Museveni alike, let's not get fooled by any of their sensationalism about minor criminals when the commanders are still in place and ready to unleash new lieutenants to lead new militias.

Meanwhile, as in previous developments of the DRC tragedy, Congolese and at some extent Rwandan people continue to be the losing side.

Victoria Dove Dimandja
Congolese Human Right Campaigner
Liberation-Congolese Women's Group/It Must Stop Campaign
With help from Henry D Gombya
Friends of Congo
KPFA

The plight of Tamil women in Sri Lanka

Kituthika Thevarajah on the degradation of half of society



Vulnerable Tamil women

On Friday 8th March, we celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) – a time not only to celebrate the contribution of women to social, political, cultural and domestic life in all countries around the world, but also to serve as an important reminder that in many places the fundamental rights of women are still at risk.

This year's United Nations IWD theme is 'A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women'. One such country where promises are made but easily broken is Sri Lanka.

In May 2009, a mere matter of days following the brutal end of the armed conflict on the island, President Rajapaksa gave a set of public assurances to the UN Secretary-General that his Government would ensure the economic and political empowerment of the Tamil majority north and east of the island; work towards a lasting political settlement; promote and protect human rights.

Take measures to address the violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during the war. However in the almost four years since that statement was made, those promises have not been fulfilled.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that similar such assurances to combat

violence against women in Sri Lanka, particularly those in the former conflict areas of the North and East have been broken as well. At the UN review of Sri Lanka's human rights record in November 2012, the Sri Lankan delegation claimed that the 'protection of women and advancement of their rights has been a cornerstone of Government policy in the post-conflict phase'.

However it is impossible to take the Government of Sri Lanka at its word, given that gender based violence was used as a weapon of war.

The Sri Lanka's Killing Fields documentary series has provided compelling evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict, including footage of dead female Tamil combatants and others who appear to have been sexually abused and then murdered by the State security forces.

In the months following the end of the armed conflict, over 300,000 people were herded into internal displacement camps. Numerous reports have emerged of the intimidation, harassment and sexual abuse committed against women whilst there.

'The Australian' newspaper ("Tamil refugees forced into sex rackets") was just one of the media organisations, who reported on the creation of

prostitution rings "run by officials" within IDP camps.

However the vulnerability of women was not only confined within these camps, but has become a predominant feature in the lives of women, throughout the conflict affected areas of the island especially.

Given the extensive loss of life in the final months of the armed conflict alone, which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, with many more unaccounted for, there are up to 90,000 war widows heading up households in the region.

Since May 2009, the north and east have been militarised by State. The militarisation of the region may suggest an increased level of security for the inhabitants.

However the reverse has been true and the current environment has posed a particular threat to the many Tamil female headed family households.

In September 2012, India's 'Hindu' newspaper reported an "overwhelming presence" of the military, with the Sri Lankan army "deploying 16 out of its 19 divisions in the Tamil-dominated regions." The establishment of military cantonments, as well as 'High Security Zones' (HSZ), has displaced many civilians.

Through its vast network of checkpoints, between and within villages and towns, the security services are able to restrict the movement of residents and monitor their activities.

Women are subject to regular abuse from soldiers. Although the military camps are closed, many people have been unable to return to their lands, houses and livelihoods.

Relief aid to these people is unreliable, and the displaced women arrive back with no assets or limited skills. The atmosphere of occupation by

the army has made it all but impossible for the Tamil community to provide services.

Tamil women are, therefore, forced to negotiate their lives with the soldiers in the region. According to the International Crisis Group, "women in Sri Lanka's predominantly Tamil-speaking north and east are facing a desperate lack of security in the aftermath of the long civil war. [...] The fact that women must rely on the military for everyday needs not only puts them at greater risk of gender-based violence, but also prevents them from building their own capacity within communities."

The high number of female headed households and the restricted livelihood opportunities open to women – due in large part to the military's involvement in economic activities – means that "prostitution and the emergence of brothels [are] on the increase in the Vanni [...] with] the primary clientele comprising] both local men and the military."

Whilst the Government of Sri Lanka has said that 'any correlation between military presence and sexual violence is unfounded', credible reports from governments, international human rights organisations and representatives of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka state otherwise.

The Tamil National Alliance (TNA) has reported on the "increasing number of sexual assaults carried out against women and girls in the Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts, often by government officials and the military. The brutality with which these assaults are carried out is especially disturbing."

The UK's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, HE Mr John Rankin, has "discussed rising crime rates for violence against women with the police in these regions and more generally."

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Added to this, according to the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights, "the fact that the military are increasingly taking over police duties, meaning that women and girls would have to address complaints directly to the perpetrators [...] [they, therefore] avoid speaking out due to fear of stigmatization, threats and possible further attacks."

Human Rights Watch (HRW), in their most recent report, has highlighted serious concerns with 'The Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province' (PTF). The PTF, established in 2009, is a major barrier to redress, as it effectively prohibits local and international organizations from providing services for sexual violence survivors. HRW also attributes the reluctance to report sexual abuse to institutional barriers imposed by the Sri Lankan government to block effective reporting and investigation of rape cases. "No member of the security forces has been prosecuted, let alone convicted, for rape in custody in the final years of the conflict or since the war's end."

Tamil women have also been coerced into joining the armed forces. Young women from women-headed families or families with five or more members have been targeted, falsely informed that they would be engaging in clerical work and then taken to mili-

tary camps for training, not being allowed to leave. At least 20 recent, forced recruits, many of whom were unconscious were admitted to Kilinochchi district hospital in December 2012 and no-one was allowed to meet them whilst they were there, including family, friends and representatives from the TNA. As the Women's Action Network (WAN), a collective of 11 women's groups from the North and the East, stated at the time "this situation raises grave concerns regarding the role of the state and the military in the lives of women, [...] and the continued security of these women while in service."

ICG has said previously, "the international response to women's insecurity [in Sri Lanka] has been unnecessarily muted." The evidence of abuses listed above, as well as the findings from Human Rights Watch most recent report, serves to highlight why it is incumbent upon the international community and the United Nations in particular to speak out about what is happening in Sri Lanka.

With international NGOs unable to freely monitor the situation and treatment of women in the North and East, due to restrictions imposed by the Government and security forces, the true scale of abuse, destitution and desperation suffered by women in the region is very difficult to assess.

As the IWD states, it is time for action to end violence against women, and therefore, it is most certainly time that Sri Lanka is held to account for its actions and made to live up its international obligations to end state sanctioned gender based violence.

Global Tamil Women Forum calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to:

Promote and protect women's rights; take concrete actions to end gender based violence; cease and desist the coercion of Tamil women into the military; and support the provisions of Security Council

Resolution 1325, which "reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security".

•Demilitarise the Tamil majority areas; restore complete civil administration to all militarised government departments and also national institutions, including the police; and ensure that the military desist from involvement in any economic activities which undermine the livelihood opportunities for inhabitants, particularly women, in Tamil areas.

Support the UN Women's Initiative, which is calling on Governments everywhere to commit to end violence against women and girls. <http://saynotoviolence.org/commit>

•Facilitate adequate witness protection so that the perpetrators of such crimes can be held accountable for their actions.

•Release immediately all those who remain in arbitrary detention.

Grant full access to International Committee of the Red Cross and other international aid agencies to facilitate the rehabilitation process for these women to return to a life of normalcy.

Global Tamil Women Forum calls on the international com-

munity, including the United Nations to:

Remain seized of the situation in Sri Lanka; call for the demilitarisation of Tamil majority areas; ask the UN country team in Sri Lanka to monitor the ground realities for women the north and east; be prepared to speak out against all cases of gender-based violence and gender inequalities in Sri Lanka.

Place conditions on aid and investment into Sri Lanka, which call explicitly for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

Support an international, independent war crimes investigation to be established as recommended by UN Secretariat appointed Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka.

GTWF is a global network working towards raising awareness of the plight of Tamil women in Sri Lanka and seeks means of empowering them. GTWF is part of the Global Tamil Forum, for further details regarding our objectives and activities please visit:

<http://globaltamilforum.org/gtf/content/gtwf>

Report of the UN Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka, March 2011, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri Lanka/>

POE Report Full.pdf, page vii, [accessed 6th March 2013]

Kituthika Thevarajah, writes on behalf of the Global Tamil Women Forum.



Tamil woman in despair

State sponsored violence in West Papua

Carmel Budiardjo on the dire poverty in the country



West Papua is widely acknowledged to be one of the few places in Indonesia where the vast majority of the people live in conditions of dire poverty because of the scarcity of employment opportunities and the widespread lack of healthcare, especially in the Central Highlands and other more inaccessible parts of the territory.

Recently, information has emerged of indigenous Papuans in some parts of the territory suffering from malnutrition. The reports also indicate that in the affected areas, a number of people are dying, especially small children. Government sources at the local and national level, while acknowledging that Papuans have died because of malnutrition, have downplayed the extent of the crisis while accusing NGO sources of deliberately exaggerating the crisis.

According to a report from AMAN, the Indigenous People's Alliance of the Archipelago, villagers in the Kwoor District, Tambrau regency, have complained for several months that they have been stricken by disease which has caused a number of deaths. AMAN says that 535 people have been affected and that as many as 95 people have died. In one

village, Baddei, the report states, in February this year, more than two hundred people were taken ill and 45 people had died. Moreover, the villagers complained of a lack of attention to their plight by the local authorities. A Church spokesperson in a village called Jokjoker reported that no health facilities were available. Doctors were rarely present to handle the situation.

Reports from Papua during the past few years have revealed that while in many inland areas, local clinics have been set up, all too frequently, qualified medical staff, most of whom are Indonesians, are rarely available in the clinics because they don't want to work in remote areas.

Another health problem in West Papua is the spread of HIV and AIDS. According to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 9 February. 'Traditional sex practices and poverty are fuelling the spread of AIDS, particularly in more remote areas in the central highlands. It is estimated that almost 3 percent of the population are HIV-positive or already suffering from full-blown AIDS, what the United Nations describes as a 'general population epidemic'.

In early February, Fairfax Me-

dia which is associated with the *Sydney Morning Herald* was given the opportunity by the government to report on the epidemic. They reported that they 'found sufferers everywhere'. In Papua, they said 'almost everyone is in a high-risk group. Police chiefs and teachers, housewives and school students are infested.'

With regard to the situation more generally in Papua, two senior church leaders, Dr Benny Giay, leader of the KINGMI Church, and Socratez Sofyan Yoman, chairman of the Alliance of Baptist Churches in Papua, issued a joint statement in March this year, drawing attention to the violence which is occurring in many places. One of the incidents which they refer to relates to what happened to a priest called Yunus Gobay, 55 years old, who was tortured and maltreated by the local police in Enarotali and released after the payment of ransom money.

On 14 July 2012, Mako Tabuni, the leader of the National Committee of West Papua, the KNPB, was killed in Jayapura. Mako Tabuni is the latest of a number of leading Papuan activists to have been killed in an attempt to stifle Papuan activists. Mako was seized by police while enjoying a snack in street stall.

The church leaders were unequivocal in stating what they believe to be the cause of all this violence: '... we believe that the Indonesian Government and the security forces

are part of the problem of violence which has been created by the state, preserved by the state and allowed to continue in order to legitimise yet more acts of violence in the Land of Papua.

International lobbying
West Papuan activists have recently made renewed efforts to win greater international understanding of the situation in their sacred motherland. Lobbying by Papuan NGOs and politicians in the South Pacific has begun to win greater recognition. The Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches, in a recent meeting in the Solomon Islands, declared that that it was crucial for regional political and civic leaders to express support for the West Papua Melanesian people.

These activities have recently intensified in advance of a meeting of Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) which is due to take place in Noumea, New Caledonia, in June this year.

The Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Moana Carcasses is reported to have stated that his government will support the West Papuan request for West Papua to be accepted as an observer at the forthcoming meeting. Vanuatu's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Edward Nipake Natapei told a local newspaper that he would support West Papua's bid to obtain MSG observer status at its June meeting.



Celebrating a new road



Flying the West Papuan flag

Such action has frequently led to their arrest and conviction on charges of treason. According to the March 2013 Update of 'Papuan Behind Bars' a new project about political prisoners in West Papua, at the end of March 2013 there were at least 40 political prisoners in Papuan jails. The best-known of these is Filep Karma, who was arrested in December 2004 and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment.

Many of those taken into custody are subject to brutal treatment including torture. The former Director of the Catholic Justice and Peace Office in Jayapura, Budi Hernawan, said in a statement earlier this year: 'The Indonesian state apparatus 'use torture to extract confessions from suspects, to collect intelligence information and/or simply to exact shock and awe effects.' Since 2000, Papuan churches

and civic organisations have been calling for dialogue with the Indonesian Government but these calls have not been met with a meaningful response. Sooner or later, the will bear fruit, with the support of all those in the international community who are prepared to listen to their collective grief. *Carmel Budiardjo writes for TAPOL*



Prime Minister Moana Carcasses

ASLEF sends greetings to Liberation on May Day



Mick Whelan
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly
President

ASLEF the train drivers' union

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Nicolas Maduro returned as Venezuelan President

Jimmy Carter called the election process, best in the world



President Nicolas Maduro

Nicolas Maduro elected as President. Right-wing opposition once again refuses to accept results. Governments internationally urged to respect the official results

VSC Election Results Bulletin 1
Nicolas Maduro has been elected President of Venezuela. Maduro won by 1.6%, a 235,000 vote lead over Henrique Capriles of the right-wing M.U.D alliance.

Turnout was again very high, at 79%. Sunday's vote was Venezuela's 17th election in the past 14 years. That is more sets of elections than were held than in the previous 40 years following the restoration of democracy in Venezuela in 1958

The election was monitored by 150 international witnesses including delegations from the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR, a body similar to the EU in Latin America), the Carter Centre and the Inter American Union of Electoral Councils.

In recent years, all of Venezuela's elections have been declared free and fair by a range of international bodies including the EU, Organisation of America States and Carter Centre. Last year Nobel Prize winner Jimmy Carter called Venezuela's process: "the best in the world".

Observers to the elections from Britain included **Neil Findley, a Member of the Scottish**

Parliament who said: "From the opening of the polls this morning, we have observed a very efficient, secure and sophisticated electoral system. The people of all parties who we spoke to praised the way the election was run and raised no concerns. The poll was free, fair and robust".

Observer Adrian Weir, Assistant Chief of Staff at Unite the Union, Europe's largest union said: "Nothing I have seen suggests anything other than a Nicolas Maduro win. The ballot was free and fair. The count was equally transparent and signed off by party witnesses including those of the Capriles's coalition, the M.U.D. I've witnessed a robust system"

Following Nicolas Maduro's election as Venezuela's President, Ken Livingstone & Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey join international calls for the results to be respected

VSC Election Results Bulletin 2
As we reported earlier today, Nicolas Maduro has been elected President of Venezuela. Maduro won by 1.6%, a 235,000 vote lead over Henrique Capriles of the right-wing M.U.D alliance. However despite all the endorsements of Venezuela's robust and independent electoral system, and in the face of a third electoral defeat in three months, Capriles right-wing coalition has resorted to the old tricks of

rejecting the elections results and disregarding the will of the people in an orchestrated attempt to discredit the outcome and to seek to isolate Venezuela internationally.

Commenting on the situation, **former Mayor of London Ken Livingstone said,** "Although Nicolas Maduro's margin of victory was narrower than polls predicted, the opposition parties in Venezuela and governments around the world should accept the results and not seek to undermine the democratic will of the majority of Venezuelan voters. They may not like the result, but it is totally clear from the 17 elections held over the past 14 years that Venezuela has a free and fair democracy and the election result represents the will of the people. Indeed, according to former US President Jimmy Carter, whose 'Carter Centre' monitor elections in many nations, Venezuela's rigorous election process is the 'best in the world'."

Len McCluskey, recently re-elected General Secretary of Unite the Union added, "Once again Venezuela has shown why former US president Jimmy Carter has said it has the best election process in the world. There should be no support from our government to those extremist movements in Venezuela calling for the results to be rejected. Those people refusing to accept the views of the Venezuelan majority today are the very same people who backed the coup against Hugo Chávez in 2002. They are certainly not democrats and seem to pick and choose which election results they recognise.

"We welcome this result which is an endorsement of the government's progressive social policies. and another step forward for those who put working people and the poorest in society first in Latin America. Furthermore, In

electing a former bus driver and trade union leader to the presidency, Venezuela has also show that politics is not a preserve of an elite few."

These latest calls following the **issuing of a statement yesterday (available online here) signed by over 150 prominent individuals from across British society including numerous MPs such as Peter Hain, Diane Abbott, Grahame Morris, Chris Williamson and Mike Weir, the TUC's General Secretary Frances O'Grady and many others including cultural figures, writers and academics,** which warned that "Concerns have been expressed that given the likelihood of a victory for Nicolas Maduro, some sections of the right-wing opposition movements may not recognise the outcome of the forthcoming election, instead engaging in boycott or non-recognition of the results in an orchestrated attempt to discredit the outcome and to isolate Venezuela internationally," before concluding that, "We, the undersigned, believe it is for the Venezuelan people alone to choose their next government, free from any external intervention and that governments around the world should respect the official results."

Andy de La Tour, actor and screenwriter, said: "The international observers are satisfied that the election has been free, fair and transparent

Francisco Dominguez, VSC Secretary, said:

"Once again, Venezuela has shown to the world that it has a vibrant and healthy democracy where both sides can air their views. Capriles and his M.U.D coalition should accept that the people have again given their verdict. When the results go the opposition's way they quickly accept them, as Capriles did when he was elected as a state governor just last December.

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