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HORN OF AFRICA BULLETIN

ANALYSES • CONTEXT • CONNECTIONS

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Traditional civil society in the Horn of Africa and its contribution to conflict prevention: the case of Eritrea

Historical and theoretical background

This article is based on the findings of a research project carried out in Eritrea from 2004 to 2006¹. It tried to explore why Eritrean society has kept its internal peace and to some extent harmony in spite of the severe disruptions caused by the war with Ethiopia (1998 to 2000) and the increasingly depressing political environment in the country. We suggest that Eritrea can be called an internal “zone of peace”, as its society has the capacity to resolve conflicts using a deeply rooted culture of mediation without resorting to uncontrolled violence and civil war. A “zone of peace” in our understanding is not a paradise on earth where both direct and structural forms of violence are absent (positive peace in the sense of Johan Galtung). Rather it is a space where, through formal and informal agreements supported by normative value systems, internal stability and relative absence of violence can be maintained within an area of widespread inter- or intra-state violence. Throughout long time periods, Eritrean society existed as an entity with functioning laws and regulations more or less independent of the respective ruling powers, be it the Italian and British colonial administration or the Ethiopian regimes of Haile Selassie and Mengistu Haile Mariam. These traditional forms of civil society, headed by religious and local elders and guided by well-elaborated customary laws, stayed very much alive even after independence in 1991 and were accepted by the government as a stabilising factor. Eritrea is a multi-ethnic society and is inhabited by Christians and Muslims, by sedentary farmers and pastoralists. In spite of the rifts between the different groups, however, the society has been able to face extreme difficulties like displacement, rapid population movements, government resettlement policies and extreme scarcity of material goods without resorting to violence. There is a high level of mutual respect in every-day life, and most importantly, there are traditional institutions like religious elders and mediators (*shemagelle*) that people can turn to in order to find a just solution in case of conflicts.

The Horn of Africa is infamous for its history of civil and bilateral warfare. Yet, it is important to realise that societies in the region, more or less independently from the governments they are ruled by, developed successful strategies of peaceful coexistence and survival at the grass-roots level in an environment marked by ethnic and religious heterogeneity and conflicts. Such social constellations may be defined as zones of peace. These zones are, certainly, not completely free of coercion, but they are stabilised by elaborated mechanisms of conflict resolution derived from century-old procedures, with the ability to come up with solutions respecting the rights and interests of all conflicting parties involved. However, it is important to note that traditional civil society consists of actors and procedures which are deeply conservative, thus they do not correspond with the Western concept of a progressive “modern” civil society struggling for modernisation and democratic change. The individual is always subordinated to the community, which has to survive as a stable entity. In this sense, traditional civil society can also be instrumentalised by repressive governments to maintain law and order. This is because it is equipped with a degree of self-regulative capacity, which makes it possible for state institutions to concentrate on the suppression of political dissent instead of fighting violent social disorder. Therefore, there may be a subtle form of unconscious cooperation between state and traditional social institutions in spite of the different motivations they are driven by.

In practical terms, we consider Eritrean society as an internal space of peace because levels of criminality and deviant behaviour are very low, structural violence caused by poverty and unequal access to scarce resources is reduced by traditional solidarity networks that complement the deficient social security network provided by the state², and disputes between different interest groups are managed by distinguished mediation mechanisms. Whenever violence occurred on Eritrean territory, it was caused by the instrumentalisation of certain interest groups by the ruling elites in order to push through their political agenda. One example is the conflict between Orthodox Christians and Muslims during the time of the British Military Administration (1941-1952), when Haile Selassie supported the Christians and armed their militias in order to facilitate the incorporation of Eritrea into the Ethiopian Empire.

After independence, the former liberation movement EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front), that is now the ruling party renamed PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice), was well aware that it had to respect traditional forms of social organisation in order to be accepted by the people. The people's convictions rested not so much in the revolutionary programmes of the liberation fighters, but in their established modes of coexistence.

Patterns of violence and peace in Eritrea

Compared to other African countries like South Africa and Kenya, levels of criminality and physical violence are remarkably low in Eritrea. Property delicts are rare, as well as physical assaults motivated by criminal intentions. Though women can usually move freely in the streets, sexually motivated violence against women occurs frequently in the military where women have to serve alongside with men. The military is out of the spheres of influence of traditional authorities. The low rate of deviant behaviour in the country seems to be due to a combination of traditional norms and values as well as those established by the liberation movement. The state makes use of its power of suppression combined with the promotion of traditional values to prevent criminality. In the social realm, the extended family puts considerable pressure on the young generation to behave according to traditional demands, i.e. showing respect to elders and to the communal or family group they belong to. Arranged marriages are still widespread, and financial support of poorer family members is considered a natural duty. There are strong mechanisms of mutual control, and serious misbehaviour is punished by exclusion from the community. On the

other hand, this traditional form of social community provides the individual with a feeling of belonging and safety that is quite different from the Western concept of individual liberalism, which often leads to isolation and treats the less successful as outsiders. Beyond supporting traditional norms and values in order to maintain stability, the state adds the picture of the ‘glorified selfless liberation fighter’ who has to be seen as an idol by the young generation. According to this ideology, the Eritrean national should be seen as an individual committed to fulfil his or her national duty, contributing to the nation’s well-being through hard work and commitment. Crime, from this point of view, would be a violation of national pride.

Empirical observations of contemporary conflict resolution in Eritrea

During our empirical study, 92 individuals in the capital Asmara and Senafe, Southern Region, were asked about their personal perceptions of conflicts and conflict resolution. Interviewees included representatives of government institutions, traditional civil society, and different population groups like traders, farmers, teachers and house wives. The collected data provides strong evidence that traditional norms and values dominate local strategies of conflict mediation, while the impact of the value system of the Liberation Front and Western individual values play a less significant role in every-day life. Although a hybrid system between these different normative influences can be detected, people obviously trust in the traditional institutions when it comes to conflicts about land, housing, property, or family affairs. Conflict regulation usually is exerted in the form of customary jurisdiction by local elders and mediators (*shemagelle*). Each ethnic group of Eritrea developed their own elaborated customary laws which are respected up to present times. The elders act as representatives of the various customary laws. Though laws of the ethnic groups differ from each other, they generally follow the objective of keeping the community stable and united by solving internal disagreements peacefully. Our study showed that people in both rural and urban areas respect customary jurisdiction and have more trust in traditional mediation than in the modern court system, which in the opinion of the people is complicated, time-consuming, expensive and infected by corruption. In fact, the modern court system in Eritrea shows little capacity, and very frequently pending cases are referred to traditional mediators by the judges of the state’s judiciary. This practice is most common in cases of civil litigation, but is sometimes also practiced in cases of criminality, especially concerning the compensation of the victim and his or her family. This is one of the major concerns of customary law and collective compensation is more important than the individual penalty of the perpetrator, who is instead punished by social exclusion. Moreover, the government introduced so-called “community courts” in 2004, which are in charge of dealing with cases related to daily-life activities, like rent, petty thefts, private contracts and the like. The lay-judges are selected by the government, but are supposed to apply customary law. The traditional system is supplemented to some extent by the EPLF/PFDJ’s principles of self-sacrifice and postponement of personal interests established during the independence struggle. However, these principles meet growing resistance by the young generation, as the state’s demands have been insatiable since the time of the war with Ethiopia. Now every citizen has to perform his or her National Service for an unlimited time period³, depriving people of a private life and the fulfilment of even modest personal goals.

Conclusion: Will Eritrea’s hybrid system of conflict resolution prevail?

The traditional system of conflict resolution has survived for centuries and has so far guaranteed internal stability at the community level in spite of a belligerent environment and successive repressive governments. But after independence, aspirations were high that the first national government would keep its promises of social justice, development and progress. However, in the past decade Eritrea faced a deep regression in its political and economic environment. There is no sign of democracy,

political parties or organised social interest groups (“modern” civil society) are absent, and it is not allowed to express dissent in any form. The economy is on a steady decline and even the most basic consumer goods like bread, milk and sugar are not available or too expensive for common people. In this environment of continued suppression without any resort to legal protest, latent conflicts based on regional, ethnic or religious loyalties may re-emerge and become violent, as such loyalties may be seen as a last resort for the masses struggling for survival. This will clearly pose a threat to traditional civil society in playing its role as an integrative force. Nevertheless, as the traditional system has survived for centuries, it is most likely that it will prove to be the most stable component of Eritrea’s hybrid norm and value system, which could so far maintain internal peace.

The missing link between the government and the traditional system is a modern civil society striving for the necessary political, social and economic reforms. As the development of modern civil society has been continuously suppressed by the ruling party, uneasy stability may continue in the future, as traditional society will most likely not become an agency that is fighting for progress, unless living conditions would become unbearable.

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¹ The project named “Zones of peace in Eritrea and Tigray under Pressure” was based at the University of Hamburg, Germany. See: Abdulkader Saleh; Hirt, Nicole; Smidt, Wolbert; Tetzlaff, Rainer (eds.): *Friedensräume in Eritrea und Tigray unter Druck. Identitätskonstruktion, soziale Kohäsion und politische Stabilität*. Berlin, Münster 2008, and: Abdulkader Saleh; Hirt, Nicole 2008: *Zones of Peace under Threat in a Region of Conflict and Crisis. The Role of Eritrean Civil Society Reviewed*, in: Bruchhaus, Eva-Maria; Sommer, Monika (eds.): *Hot Spot Horn of Africa Revisited. Approaches to Make Sense of Conflict*. Münster 2008.

² It is important to note that the large Eritrean diaspora community living in Europe, North America and the Arab states provides a regular source of income for a significant number of those families living inside the country and cannot be underestimated in its indirect role of maintaining internal stability. The diaspora alleviates poverty by fulfilling their traditional obligations of supporting their family members.

³ After independence, the government introduced a compulsory National Service that combined military training and reconstruction work and was limited to 18 months. In 2002, the Warsay Yikealo Development Campaign was introduced, forcing conscripts between the age of 18 to 40 to work under military supervision and without salary for an unlimited time frame.

Conflict patterns in the Horn of Africa 1990-2008

Introduction

The Horn of Africa has in the most recent history been constantly marred by violent conflicts. Sally Healy has actually observed in a 2007 Horn of Africa Group Report *Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel* that the magnitude of the conflicts in the Horn, taken over last 18 years, is greater than in any other region in Africa.

The definition of the Horn of Africa differs according to authors and specialists. Whereas some authors confine the Horn of Africa to Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and

Somalia, others add Sudan and Kenya to the list. Yet, other authors expand the region to include Uganda. In this article, the Horn of Africa will refer to countries that form the Inter-Government Authority on Development (IGAD) namely Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Patterns of Conflicts in the Horn

The 2007 *Human Security Brief* classifies conflicts into three general types: state-based, non-state based conflicts, and one-sided violence. State-based conflicts involve at least one national government. They include inter-state, intra-state and internationalised intra-state conflicts. Non-state based conflicts are fought between militias and warlords, or ethnic and religious groups without the involvement of the national government. One-sided violence, on the other hand, refers to deliberate attacks on or massacres of unarmed civilians by either government forces or non-state militias.

The inter-state conflicts that have been recorded in the Horn between 1990 and 2008 are the 1998-2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia war and the three-day military clash between Eritrea and Djibouti along their common border in June 2008. However, intra-state conflicts have been more prevalent. These conflicts have been between governments and groups that have challenged their legitimacy. Also prevalent in the Horn are non-state conflicts, particularly conflicts involving militias, warlords and ethnic groups. The intra-community conflicts also fall under this category. There have also been instances of one-sided violence.

The diverse nature of the countries that constitute the Horn could lead to the assumption that also conflicts in the region take very different forms. However, all the conflicts in the region are either linked directly, or have an impact on each other. The conflict in Somalia, for instance, has immediate implications for conflict dynamics in Ethiopia, where groups such as the Oromo and the Ogadeni rebels are either emboldened or restricted depending on the balance of forces. Similarly, the Ethiopia-Eritrea border conflict has direct implications on the conflict in Somalia.

Thus, as Makumi Mwagiru argues in his paper *The Greater Horn of Africa Conflict System: Conflict Patterns, Strategies and Management Practices* (1997), the pattern of conflicts in the Horn of Africa is at the same time depressing and interesting. The pattern is depressing because conflicts in the region have been highly destructive. But it is also interesting because it brings into focus the regional dimension and the nexus in the conflict system. The notion of conflict systems is premised on the understanding that every conflict has intimate relationships regionally. Thus, what appears at a casual glance to be individual conflicts in one region, are in fact parts of a wider pattern of conflict. The notion of conflict systems recognises trans-border realities of conflicts, and therefore, perceives individual conflicts as an integral part of a wider conflict system.

An analysis of the Horn of Africa conflict system reveals the following patterns. Firstly, the structure of states, the leadership configuration and the inability to form all-encompassing national identities have spawned violent resistance that takes different forms of conflict according to local conditions and traditions. The sheer proliferation of conflicting parties, for example, is an indication of the level of state weaknesses. While analysing state weaknesses in Africa in the *Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse* [the introduction in the book *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (1995)], William Zartman conceptualises a failed state as one in which institutional structures exist but they hardly perform all or some of the core functions of a state. A collapsed state, on the other hand, involves both a functional failure (inability to perform core functions) and an institutional failure (the political superstructure has ceased to exist on a continuous base and as part of an overarching integrative framework).

The table below shows the major actors that have been involved in conflicts in the Horn of Africa countries between 1990 and 2008.

Country	Actors	
	Actor A	Actor B
Djibouti	Government of Djibouti	Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie (FRUD) – Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy) rebels
	Government of Djibouti	Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie (FRUD) – Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy- Dini faction) rebels
Eritrea	Government of Eritrea	Eritrean Jihad Movement (EJM)
	Government of Eritrea	Eritrean National Forces Alliance (ENFA)
Ethiopia	State of Ethiopia	State of Eritrea
	Government of Ethiopia	Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)
	Government of Ethiopia	Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)
Kenya	Party of National Unity (PNU)	Orange Democratic Movement (ODM)
Somalia	Government of Somalia	Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF); Somali National Movement (SNM); United Somali Congress (USC); and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)
	United Somali Congress/ Somali Salvation Front (USC/SSF)	United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA); Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF); Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM); Rah
	United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA); Somali People's Movement (SPM); Somali Salvation National Movement (SSNM); Somali Democratic Movement (SDM); United Somali Front (USF); Somali Democratic Alliance (SDA); Somali Africans Muke Organization (SAMO); Somali National Democratic Union (SNDU); Somali National Front (SNF); Somali National Union (SNU); United Somali Party (USP); Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA); Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM); Allied Somali Forces (ASF); Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC)	
	Union of Islamic Courts (UIC)	Transitional Federal Government (TFG); Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT)
Sudan	Government of Sudan	Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A); Sudan People's Liberation Movement – United (SPLM-united); South Sudan Independence Movement (SSIM); and National Democratic Alliance (NDA)
	Government of Sudan	Sudan Liberation Movement (SLA); Justice and Equality Movement (JEM); Sudan Liberation Movement (SLA)-Minawi faction; Sudan Liberation Movement (SLA)-Abdulwahid Nur faction
Uganda	Government of Uganda	Lords Resistance Army (LRA)

Source: Karanja Mbugua, *Conflicts in Africa 1990-2008*, unpublished document.

One can draw from the table that the weaker the state, the higher the number of actors in the conflict. The largest number of actors in the conflict exists in Somalia where the state has collapsed, while few actors exist in Kenya and Uganda where the states are relatively strong.

Secondly, neighbouring countries have intervened and thereby prolonged each other's conflicts. For example, Sudan accused Uganda of supporting the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) while Uganda accused Sudan of

supporting the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and West Nile Bank Front (WNBF). The SPLM was the dominant armed movement in Southern Sudan and had Ugandan connections after it was dislodged from Ethiopia in 1991, while the LRA was based in southern Sudan after it was dislodged from northern Uganda by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) in the mid-1990s. In the paper *Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa*, Professor Samson Wasara of the University of Juba identified the following patterns of destabilisation and militarization in the Horn of Africa in the 1990s.

Countries in conflict	Armed opposition movements	Active support from
Sudan-Eritrea	SPLM & NDA	Eritrea
	EJM & ENFA	Sudan
Sudan-Ethiopia	ONLF & OLF	Sudan
	SPLM	Ethiopia
Sudan-Uganda	LRA & WNBF	Sudan
	SPLM	Uganda
Eritrea-Ethiopia	ENFA	Ethiopia
	ONLF & OLF	Eritrea

Source: Wasara Samson, *Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa*, *African Association of Political Science* (2002), Vol 7 No. 2, pages 39 – 60; table available on page 47.

Thirdly, the key cause of the conflicts revolves around centre-periphery relations, whose hallmarks are political exclusion and economic marginalisation, but the conflicts have been expressed through ethnic or religious identity.

Fourthly, all the state-based conflicts are deeply linked to non-state based conflicts. Actually, intra-state conflicts in most cases have transformed the inter-communal conflicts, cattle rustling, banditry and highway robberies into militarised campaigns within and beyond national boundaries. Prof. Wasara identifies the following patterns of national and transnational armed cattle rustling and banditry in the 1990s.

Country	Community/clusters	Targeted areas of raids
Ethiopia	Koroma	North-eastern Kenya
	Nyangatom	South-eastern Sudan
Kenya	Marakwet	North-eastern Uganda
	Turkana	Southern Ethiopia
	Sabiny	South-eastern Sudan
Sudan	Boya	Northern Kenya
	Didinga	North-eastern Kenya
	Toposa	North-eastern Uganda
	Murle	Southern Ethiopia
Uganda	Karamajong	Northern Kenya
	Dodoth	South-eastern Sudan
	Jie	North-eastern Kenya/Kenya's Rift valley

Source: Wasara Samson, *Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa*, *African Association of Political Science* (2002), Vol 7 No. 2, pages 39 – 60; table available on page 51.

Lastly, the conflicts in the Horn have been aligned to global agendas. Sally Healy has, for instance, argued that when Sudan was labelled a sponsor of terrorism by the United States in the 1990s, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda found a common interest in a containment policy towards the Sudan. She adds that while Sudan has moved on, Eritrea's hospitality towards the leaders of Somali's Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) has attracted a warning that the country will be designated a terrorist state. Such alignment with global agendas has amplified proxy conflicts in the Horn.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can argue that it is important that players in the conflict resolution field in the Horn of Africa view the region as a conflict system. Such a regional analysis not only reveals interesting patterns of conflict such as the linkage between state-based, non-state based conflicts and one-sided violence. Also, as Makumi Mwagiru argues in the paper cited earlier, the idea of analysing conflicts within a system has important implications for conflict resolution. Analysing conflicts in a system recognises that resolution of a particular individual conflict that does not take into account systemic (or regional) realities is unlikely to be effective, and less enduring. It also implies that conflict resolution practices, which do not engage other interested actors within the conflict system, are unlikely to succeed simply because systemic actors that are not involved in the resolution process are likely to sabotage any outcome of the resolution.

One can also conclude that the linkage between various forms of conflicts in the Horn, their social complexity, protractedness and high levels of violence have made it difficult to resolve them. The problem has been worsened by the general poverty, poor governance and long-term degradation of social systems and physical environment. But even if these conflicts are resolved in the near future, their legacies will continue to resonate for a long time. That calls for continued proactive international engagement particularly by governments and civil society to assist countries of the Horn in resolving social conflicts peacefully, manage social tensions and promote peaceful co-existence.

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NEWS AND EVENTS

GENERAL

"Africa, step forth in faith!" – AACC 9th General Assembly in Maputo

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), a fellowship of 172 member Churches and Christian Councils in 43 African Countries, held its 9th General Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique from 7 to 12 December. The Assembly gathered more than 1400 people from its members and ecumenical partners under the motto "Africa, step forth in faith!". Following 4 days of intensive exchange both in business and workshop sessions, the Maputo Covenant was launched on Friday, 12 December. The Covenant recognises challenges for African churches in 9 different

areas, among them HIV/Aids and other critical health conditions, the role of women as agents for peace and development, moral regeneration of the continent and entrenching human rights.

The General Assembly elected and inducted AACC's new leadership for the coming five years. The new President is Anglican Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa from Tanzania, who succeeds Rt. Rev. Dr. Nyansako-ni-Nku from Cameroon. The new AACC President will be assisted by five Vice Presidents from the different African regions. The new President and the General Secretary Rev. Dr. André Karamaga from Rwanda were inducted during the official closing worship on 12 December. *Official AACC Assembly weblog (<http://aaccassembly08.wordpress.com>)*

KENYA

New media law provokes protests and arrests

The "Kenya Communications Amendment Bill 2008", which is also known as "ICT Bill", was passed by the Kenyan Parliament on 10 December. The ICT Bill provides for heavy fines and prison sentences for press offenses. It also envisages the creation of a government-appointed "communications commission" that would be in charge of granting broadcast licenses. The Bill gives considerable influence to the Information Minister. The law entitles the Information Minister to "issue policy guidelines" to the communications commission that is however described as "independent". In addition, the minister would have unilateral power to interrupt broadcasts, dismantle radio and TV stations and tap telephones. The bill is now awaiting presidential ratification. According to government officials, the ICT bill is supposed to reinforce the media's professionalism.

Kenyan media houses and national and international media institutions, such as the Nairobi-based Media Institute and Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), have criticised the bill and urged for its withdrawal and review. Protests culminated on Kenya's Jamhuri Day (12 December) in context of the official independence day celebrations. Several well-known media personalities were arrested by the Kenyan police.

According to RSF, the Bill represented a big step backwards for press freedom in a country that is known for a diverse and outspoken media.

Reporters Sans Frontières, allafrica.com, BBC

SOMALIA

TFG: Deepening rift between President and Prime Minister

The rift between Interim President Abdullahi Yusuf and Prime Minister Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein has been deepening in recent weeks, culminating in the dismissal of the Prime Minister by Abdullahi Yusuf on 14 December. Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein refused this decision and called it "unconstitutional". He seems to have the support of the Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP), who voted on 15 December to reinstate Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein as Prime Minister.

The dispute among the two leading figures of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) began earlier this year, when the Prime Minister fired Mogadishu's mayor, a close ally of President Yusuf. Also, they differed in their position towards recent peace talks with the Djibouti-wing of the Alliance for the Reliberation of Somalia (ARS). President Yusuf categorically rejects the Djibouti agreement that also includes provisions for power-sharing with the opposition group, denouncing it as signed in the interest of a single clan.

Reuters, Shabelle Media Network (Mogadishu)

SUDAN

Diocese of Torit marks 25th anniversary with calls for peace

Speaking at the mass marking the Diocese's 25th anniversary on 8 December, the Catholic Bishop of Torit, Akio Johnson Mutek, called on believers to transcend tribalism and unite to build a peaceful south Sudan. Torit is located in Eastern Equatoria, which is one of the southern states that suffer most from tribal tensions especially related to cattle rustling. Archbishop Paulino Lokudo Loro of Juba acknowledged that Torit was the most affected diocese during the Civil War from 1984 to 2005. He encouraged the youth to build a new vision for a south Sudan that is free of tribalism and a place of peace and reconciliation. He also urged priests to be united and act as exemplary leaders.

The diocese of Torit is served by more than 50 priests. It has 15 parishes and runs three secondary schools, seven primary schools and two hospitals.

Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA)

Civilian disarmament in south Sudan:

Efforts in 2008 elusive, government rethinks process

Efforts by southern Sudanese states to forcefully collect arms from civilians have according to sources been poorly planned, in consequence leading to violence, deaths and increased insecurity some sources said. In June 2008, Southern Sudanese President Salva Kiir directed all southern states to disarm their populations by the end of 2008. However, no government policy on how disarmament should be undertaken existed.

Two months ago, soldiers fought with civilians in Rumbek during a disarmament effort and 7 people died. Now, different voices call for a better strategy. David Pokier, Deputy Inspector General of Police said "We have to start to work together with the community. Instead of using force to take arms away from the people, it should be done through the community, the leaders, chiefs, elders of the villages. It would be peaceful and everybody would surrender arms without causing problems." Deng Leek, MP for Bor in Jonglei State, called for better planning. "[It] is a difficult process, when someone has a gun for a long time it becomes a part of him or herself," he told IRIN. "To take it is to take away his life, you have to plan so that you don't expose those who have been disarmed." Claire Mc Evoy from the Small Arms Survey Sudan project stated that "Until South Sudanese feel safe enough to give up their firearms in the knowledge that the government will provide security for them, disarmament will likely lead to pockets of resistance and violence."

The process is now being reconsidered. In October, the council of ministers set up the Bureau of Community Security and Small Arms Control under the Ministry of Internal Affairs to develop and coordinate a policy for small arms control. The new policy also reflects the regional nature of the problem. The bureau will coordinate with Sudan's neighbours and northern authorities.

IRIN

RESOURCES

GENERAL

AACC 9th General Assembly

For comprehensive information about the 9th General Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), please visit the official weblog.

<http://aaccassembly08.wordpress.com/>

“The growing importance of civilians in armed conflict” (December 2008)

This policy brief, published by the Center for Security Studies at ETH, Zurich, argues that civilians play an increasingly important and complex role in armed conflicts. At the same time, the author Andreas Wenger states, the lines between ‘civilians’ and ‘combatants’ are becoming blurred.

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=94537&lng=en>

“Violent non-state actors and national and international security”

(November 2008)

This case study by Phil Williams for the International Relations and Security Network (ISN), Zurich, Switzerland explores the phenomenon of violent non-state actors (VNSAs). It identifies the various sub-types and distinctive characteristics of each type. The report outlines the factors, developments and trends that have contributed to their emergence and addresses how the concept of the nation-state is being eroded by the fact that states no longer hold an absolute monopoly on the use of force within their sovereign territory. Additional consideration is also given to the potential implications of VNSAs providing alternative governance, as well as goods and services that the state is unable or unwilling to offer and provide.

<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=93880&lng=en>

Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies

Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies is a global transdisciplinary fellowship of concerned academics and practitioners, who wish to promote dignity and transcend humiliation. Currently the fellowship includes around 1,000 personally invited members, and the website is being accessed by ca. 40,000 people from more than 180 countries per year.

www.humiliationstudies.org

What determines the effectiveness of peacekeepers in protecting civilians? – Series published by Ford Institute for Human Security (University of Pittsburgh)

“Does force composition matter? Determining if the relative homogeneity of a peacekeeping operation leads to decreased attacks on civilians” (Brief 3, December 2008)

www.fordinstitute.pitt.edu/ford_bulletins/Brief_3_Composition.pdf

“Simply a matter of timing? Examining the effectiveness of peacekeeper deployment during different phases of a conflict” (Brief 2, November 2008)

www.fordinstitute.pitt.edu/ford_bulletins/Brief2Final.pdf

“Does deployment matter? Examining the conditions under which peacekeeping missions effectively protect displaced persons and refugees” (Brief 1)

www.fordinstitute.pitt.edu/ford_bulletins/DoesDeploymentMatter.pdf

“Durable solutions for IDPs in protracted situations: Three case studies”

(October 2008)

This paper by Alex Mundt and Elizabeth Ferris from the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement examines three case studies of protracted internal displacement: Colombia, Georgia, and Darfur, with a particular focus on the role of IDPs in negotiations to resolve the conflict, the involvement of key international actors in influencing the situation on the ground and the possibilities for durable solutions.

www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/rc/papers/2008/1028_internal_displacement_mundt/1028_internal_displacement_mundt.pdf

SOMALIA

Human Rights Watch: “So much to fear”

“So much to fear: War crimes and the devastation of Somalia” (December 2008)

This 104-page report describes how the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), the Ethiopian forces that intervened in Somalia to support it and insurgent forces have committed widespread and serious violations of the laws of war. Frequent violations include indiscriminate attacks, killings, rape, use of civilians as human shields, and looting.

www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/somalia1208webwcover.pdf

“So much to fear: Accounts from Somali refugees in Kenya ” (December 2008)

All sides in the Somali conflict are committing war crimes. Rape, assassination, looting, and indiscriminate bombings are common. The victims are civilians. These videos capture the stories of the people who fled Mogadishu.

www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/features/somalia/index.htm

“Nobody is watching. America’s hidden war in Somalia” (November 2008)

Paul Salopek in the Chicago Tribune

www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-shadow_war2nov24,0,4720127.story?page=1

UGANDA

New International Crisis Group (ICG) report: “Northern Uganda: The road to peace, with or without Kony” (December 2008)

www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=5804&l=1

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Editorial information

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For a link to HAB and more information see www.life-peace.org

Editorial principles

The Horn of Africa Bulletin (HAB) is an international newsletter, compiling analyses, news and resources primarily in the Horn of Africa region. The material published in HAB represents a variety of sources and does not necessarily represent the views of the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) or the cooperating partners, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and the Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA). Writers and sources are normally referred to, although in exceptional cases, the editors of the HAB may choose not to reveal the real identity of a writer or publish the source.

