

RIPPLES OF GENOCIDE

JOURNEY THROUGH EASTERN CONGO

Angelina Jolie, actress and Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and John Prendergast of the International Crisis Group journeyed through the war-torn eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in September 2003. To see and hear their full journal, visit <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/congojournal/>.

GLOSSARY OF KEY NAMES AND TERMS

AFRICA'S FIRST WORLD WAR: The conflict in the DRC is known as Africa's first world war because it is the widest interstate conflict in modern African history. In 1998, it involved Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi against the government of the DRC, which was supported by Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia. Additionally, they all have armed and supported militias, who continue to fight even after all the foreign countries officially withdrew in 2003.

BELGIAN KING LEOPOLD: In the 1870s, Belgium's King Leopold II set up a private venture to colonize what was then known as Kongo. He commissioned British explorer Henry Stanley to explore the Kongo River and later to establish areas of control along the river basin. European powers recognized Belgian King Leopold's claim to Congo (as the Belgians spelled the name), at the Berlin Conference, 1884–85. In 1885, Leopold announced the Free Congo State, headed by himself. He then expanded the areas under his control. Millions of Congolese are believed to have died during this period, either killed or worked to death. In 1908, the country of Belgium annexed Congo.

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY: Any specified violent acts such as murder, extermination, or enslavement when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack.

DEMOBILIZATION AND REPATRIATION (OF RWANDAN REFUGEES): The process by which Rwandan nationals who are carrying arms in the DRC are either turning in those arms or being forced to hand over their weapons, and then are returned to Rwanda.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (CONGO; DRC): During the precolonial period, parts of the area currently known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo were called Kongo, although this name did not cover the full extent of the modern Congolese borders. European powers recognized Belgian King Leopold's claim to Congo at the Berlin Conference, 1884–85. King Leopold and subsequently the Belgian state expanded their control over new areas. In 1960, Congo became independent. In 1965, Mobutu Sese Seko took control of the country in a military coup, renaming the country Zaire in 1971. In 1997, Tutsi and other anti-Mobutu rebels defeated Mobutu's forces. Laurent Kabila was installed as president; he then renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

GENOCIDAIRES: The French word for people who commit a genocide; it generally refers to perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide.

GENOCIDE: According to the legal definition, as codified in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. For more information, see www.ushmm.org/conscience/history/.

GENOCIDE IN RWANDA: In April 1994, extremist leaders of Rwanda's Hutu majority launched a campaign of extermination against the country's Tutsi minority. In 100 days, as many as 800,000 people were murdered and hundreds of thousands of women were raped. For more information, see www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/rwanda/.

INTERAHAMWE: In Kinyarwanda, the Rwandan language, "those who fight together." The Interahamwe was a militia formed in advance of the Rwandan genocide by extremist Hutu political parties. During the genocide, the Interahamwe led and engaged in much of the killing. As the genocide ended, many members of the militia fled, along with civilians, to Congo where they regrouped.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDP): "Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border." (From Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, UN Office for the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs, 1998).

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC): Court established on July 17, 1998, when 120 states adopted its statute. It is "the first ever permanent, treaty-based, international criminal court established to promote the rule of law and ensure that the gravest international crimes do not go unpunished." For more information, see www.icc-cpi.int/.

KINSHASA: The capital of the DRC.

MAYI MAYI: A Swahili term originally applied to numerous locally based groups of Congolese combatants committed to defending their communities against outsiders (broadly defined). Various Mayi Mayi groups have been accused of human rights violations and resorting to violence to extend their power—not simply to protect their communities. They do not have a centralized command structure.

MILITIAS: Civilians trained as soldiers but who are not part of a regular army.

MOBUTU SESE SEKO [1930–1997]: Born Joseph Désiré Mobutu, he joined the Congolese nationalist movement in 1956. In 1960, he led an army coup against the government of Patrice Lumumba and became the army chief of staff. After a second coup in 1965, he assumed the office of prime minister and remained the head of the Congolese state until 1997. Instituting a policy of "national authenticity," he changed the Congo's name to Zaïre in 1971 and his own name to Mobutu Sese Seko in 1972. He suppressed tribal conflicts and encouraged a sense of nationhood, but at the same time he amassed a huge personal fortune through economic exploitation and corruption—leading some to call his rule a "kleptocracy." By 1991, economic deterioration and unrest led him to agree to share power with opposition leaders, but he used the army to thwart change until May 1997, when rebel forces led by Laurent Kabila expelled him from the country. Mobutu died in Morocco on September 7, 1997.

MOUVEMENT DE LIBÉRATION DU CONGO (MLC): In English, Congolese Liberation Movement. A militia based at Gbadolite in the DRC, but backed by Uganda, its stated aim was the overthrow of the Kinshasa-based government of Laurent Kabila. As part of the ongoing peace process, the leader of the MLC, Jean-Pierre Bemba, has become one of the DRC's vice presidents. The MLC is accused of resource exploitation and human rights abuses.

PEACE PROCESS IN THE DRC: A cease-fire was signed in July 1999 by the governments of the DRC, Zimbabwe, Angola, Uganda, Namibia, and Rwanda, as well as some of the major Congolese armed rebel groups, but sporadic fighting continued, particularly in the east. President Laurent Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 and his son Joseph Kabila was named head of state. In October 2002, the new president was successful in negotiating the withdrawal of Rwandan forces occupying eastern Congo. Shortly afterwards, the Pretoria Accord was signed by all the major remaining warring parties to end the fighting and establish a government of national unity. A transitional government was set up in July 2003. Joseph Kabila remains president and is joined by four vice presidents representing the former government, former rebel groups, and the political opposition. Presidential and Parliamentary elections are to be held in March and April 2006.

RAPE: Under international humanitarian law, rape can be considered a crime against humanity if it is conducted as part of a program of widespread and systematic violence, or as an act of genocide if it is coupled with the requisite intent.

RASSEMBLEMENT CONGOLAIS POUR LA DEMOCRATIE (RCD):

In English, Congolese Rally for Democracy. This is a militia that came to the fore in 1998, backed by Rwanda and Uganda and determined to topple the Kinshasa-based government of Laurent Kabila. However, the group has splintered since then, with Rwanda backing one faction (RCD-Goma, now included in the transitional government) and Uganda backing another (RCD-ML, wracked by fractures throughout and no longer supported by Uganda). All RCD factions are accused of resource exploitation and human rights abuses.

REFUGEES: According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is someone who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or membership of a particular social or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or unwilling, owing to such fear, to return to it.”

UNITED NATIONS (UN): In 1945, representatives of 50 countries met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization to draw up the United Nations Charter. The UN officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, when the Charter was ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and a majority of other signatories. Its main bodies are the General Assembly, the Secretariat, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice. Find out more at www.un.org. Teachers seeking additional information can find kits at www.un.org/geninfo/faq/teacherskit/teacherkit.htm

UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR): Agency established on December 14, 1950, by the United Nations General Assembly. Its mandate is “to lead and coordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.” For more information, see www.unhcr.ch/.

UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION MISSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (MONUC): The UN Mission in the DRC, known by its French acronym MONUC, was created in late 1999. The Security Council voted for a resolution authorizing the deployment of a liaison team comprising UN military officers as well as civilian, political, humanitarian, and administrative staff. They were tasked to liaise with the different signatories to the agreement. For more information, see www.monuc.org.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL (UNSC): The UNSC has primary responsibility, under the charter that established the United Nations, for international peace and security. It has five permanent members: China, France, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States. It also has ten nonpermanent members, selected from the General Assembly for two-year terms. For more information, see www.un.org/Docs/sc/.

WAR CRIMES: Violations of the laws, as codified in the Geneva Conventions, or customs of war.

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