

Africa

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On the whole, conditions for minorities in Africa remained bleak during 2006, and were clearly worse in those places where minorities lacked representation. Mass atrocities in Darfur intensified following a May peace agreement that largely excluded two important minority groups. Likewise, a July 2006 peace agreement in the Cabinda region of Angola appeared to be in jeopardy following the exclusion of key Cabindan factions. In Nigeria, conflict in the Niger Delta region continued unabated as credible representatives of Delta minorities were largely excluded from discussions about the sharing of oil revenues and that issue's link to endemic violence. In other parts of Nigeria, systematic exclusion of minorities in the name of 'indigeneity' fuelled ethnic violence. In the Horn of Africa, pastoralist minorities competing for ever scarcer resources came into worsening conflict with each other, even as they remained under-represented in government institutions dealing with their plight. At the end of 2006, the US-backed Ethiopian military action to break the grip of the Islamist alliance in Somalia raised the spectre of a growing conflict, drawing in many different foreign actors, as the humanitarian plight of Somalis worsens.

Liberia saw improved prospects as new President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf aimed to include all ethnic groups in her government and emphasized the empowerment of girls and women. Burundi had reason to hope that cyclical inter-ethnic atrocities might finally cease as the final rebel faction signed up to a peace agreement. Though still suffering from years of brutal conflict, the Democratic Republic of the Congo went to the polls for the first time in 40 years with the hope that an elected government might finally end the rampage of warlords who have brought suffering to all of its many minorities and chronic sexual violence to Congolese women.

West Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

A stand-off continues between a government dominated by southern ethnic groups, notably those of the Akan linguistic-cultural area and the minority Bété (of which President Laurent Gbagbo is one), and northern New Forces rebels largely consisting of Muslim ethnic Dioulas (Mandé) and Senoufos. For decades, Côte d'Ivoire had one of Africa's strongest economies and attracted large immigrant

communities from Burkina Faso and Mali, many of whom stayed for generations, but whose citizenship is now disputed by many southerners.

The seeds of the current conflict were sowed in 1999 when Robert Guei (himself a Yacouba, a minority group along the Liberian border) seized power in a 1999 military coup and promoted his predecessor's xenophobic notion of 'Ivoirité' to question the citizenship of northerners, and to sideline prominent northern presidential candidate Alassane Outtara in 2000. Laurent Gbagbo replaced Guei following troubled elections that same year, but embraced 'Ivoirité', and his supporters killed scores of northerners. Northern army units mutinied in September 2002 and the resulting clashes killed thousands, leaving the country *de facto* partitioned.

Apart from a spike of violence in November 2004, an international buffer of 7,000 United Nations (UN) peacekeepers and 4,000 French troops has been successful in preventing the resumption of large-scale clashes. Following the failure of peace agreements in January 2003 and July 2004, the two sides signed a new compact in April 2005. The agreement aimed to address northern concerns about identification, nationality and electoral laws; it led to the demobilization of militant groups linked to President Gbagbo and provided for a transitional power-sharing government until elections in October 2005. With lagging implementation and tension still palpable, the UN Security Council approved an extension of the provisional government until October 2006, albeit under an internationally appointed prime minister alongside President Gbagbo.

In November 2006, with elections cancelled and leaders on both sides of the north-south divide cultivating ethnic division, the UN Security Council extended this arrangement until October 2007 elections. Though the Security Council resolution transfers military and civilian authority from President Gbagbo to appointed Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, Gbagbo immediately announced that 'any articles, any clauses in the resolution which constitute violations of Côte d'Ivoire's constitution will not be applied'.

Liberia

In January 2006, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was inaugurated as Liberia's new president. She pledged

to end the political manipulation of ethnicity, empower Liberia's women, and pursue broad economic development. In February, Johnson Sirleaf inaugurated a Truth and Reconciliation Commission tasked with helping the country face the past and overcome its divisions. At her request, the following month Nigeria surrendered former President Charles Taylor to Liberia for delivery to the international war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone. In a stunning break with warlordism and impunity in Africa, he now awaits trial in The Hague, while Liberia seeks to overcome the deep scars to which he contributed.

Around 95 per cent of Liberia's population consists of 16 indigenous ethnic groups, with Americo-Liberian descendants of freed slaves making up most of the rest. Americo-Liberian elites established Liberia in 1847, employing divide-and-rule practices and limited voting rights against indigenous Liberians to maintain dominance until 1980, when Samuel K. Doe overthrew the ruling party. Rather than empowering all indigenous Liberians, Doe built a brutal dictatorship based on favouritism for his small ethnic Krahn and related groups. His persecution of such other minorities as the Gio, Grebo and Mano fuelled a December 1989 insurgency led by Charles Taylor.

Rallied to 'kill the Krahn', Taylor's forces engaged in years of brutal conflict against other factions and West African peacekeepers before Taylor assumed the presidency in 1997. His repression of disfavoured minorities encouraged a new rebellion in 1999. As rebels advanced on the capital – and following announcement of his indictment for war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone – Taylor fled to Nigeria in August 2003. After two years of transitional government noted for weak leadership and corruption, in November 2005 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won the presidency with broad support from diverse ethnic groups.

Nigeria

In the course of 2006, Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, strained under its complicated federal system, the political manipulation of ethnicity, and unrest over resource sharing.

The Igbo (Ibo), Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba peoples make up around 65 per cent of Nigeria's population, but there are over 250 ethnic groups. During the colonial era, Britain gave preferred educational

opportunities to the largely Christian populations of the south, with northern Muslims relying to a great extent on Koranic education. Beginning in colonial times, there have been varying attempts to manage or exploit Nigeria's ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity through various forms of federalism. Since 1996, the country has been divided into 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas.

Beginning with the country's 1979 Constitution, the concept of 'indigeneity' has been perpetuated in the current 1999 Constitution. This system categorizes all Nigerians as indigenes or non-indigenes (also labelled 'settlers') to a region based on where their parents or grandparents were born. The mechanism's intent was to ensure ethnic parity in education and employment, as well as to protect traditional cultures. But in 2006 Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group separately reported that the principle has instead systematically marginalized millions of Nigerians and encouraged ethno-linguistic identity politics that have fanned the flames of inter-communal violence, even where the roots of many conflicts lie elsewhere or pre-date policies of indigeneity. The mere definition of which groups are indigenous to a region creates many controversies; disputed historical migration patterns and intermarriage often make clear delineations impossible. The policy has become a tool for indigenes across the country to exclude competing 'settlers' from scarce educational and employment opportunities, even if these are life-long residents of the community. Not surprisingly, this has led to fierce resentment among the excluded.

For example, in diverse Plateau State, indigeneity has been used by Christian politicians to maintain dominance through exclusion of Muslim Hausa and Fulani 'settlers'. The Jarawa ethnic group is also classified as 'non-indigene', although it also fails to qualify for indigenous status anywhere in Nigeria. Between 1999 and 2004 in Plateau State, inter-communal fighting arising from disputes over indigeneity, land and religion resulted in 250,000 internally displaced persons. April 2006 fighting between members of the Pan and Gomai ethnic groups over issues of indigeneity resulted in over 100 killed and 8,000 displaced persons.

In the wake of the September 2005 publication of Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed, in February 2006 Muslim mobs attacked minority

Christians in northern Nigeria, killing 16 and burning 11 churches. The government deployed soldiers and riot police to contain the violence.

Niger Delta

Oil from the Niger Delta has made Nigeria the world's twelfth largest oil producer and accounts for 95 per cent of its foreign currency revenue. Despite high world oil prices, such minority groups of the Niger Delta as the Ijaw and Ogoni remain mired in poverty, lacking in education and jobs, and suffering from oil companies' pollution of their air and water. Nigeria's 1999 Constitution gives the central government ownership of the country's natural resources. Most of the derivative percentage passed back to state and local accounts is stolen by corrupt officials. Tensions have mounted, with ethnic resistance groups in the Delta increasingly turning to violent means. Militants launched a series of attacks on oil installations in January and February 2006. In April, President Olusegun Obasanjo proposed a 'Marshall Plan' for the Delta, but only with involvement of corrupt local officials and exclusion of many civil society organizations that enjoy credibility in the region. Following further attacks, in August 2006 Obasanjo ordered a crackdown on militants while still pursuing negotiations. The abduction of oil workers in October 2006 pointed to continuing radicalization among minority populations of the Delta, and an ongoing need to address the causes of their anger.

North Africa

Algeria

In 2006 the Berber minority of Algeria, comprising 20–30 per cent of the population, viewed with trepidation a possible thaw in the relationship between the government and Islamic militant organizations, all the more so following attacks on Berber political leaders.

In 2001, years of agitation for greater recognition of their Tamazight language, music and culture culminated in rioting. Implementation of vague January 2005 government concessions to Berber demands stemming from the unrest has been overshadowed by a *rapprochement* between the government and Islamic extremists. In February 2006, the cabinet of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika declared a six-month amnesty for government forces and most Islamist militants who were involved in

the civil war of the 1990s if they agreed to disarm, but by its expiration fewer than 300 militants had accepted the offer. The sweeping 'law implementing the charter on peace and national reconciliation' also criminalized discussion of the conflict. Some Berber organizations that favour a secular Algerian state, such as the Movement for Autonomy in Kabylie, feared that the Bouteflika government was getting too close to the Islamists, even as this relationship remained ambivalent. In October 2006, the president of the Popular Assembly in the Tizi Ouzou province of the Kabylie region was shot and killed. The government blamed Islamic militants for this and two other assassinations of Berber leaders over the previous 13 months.

Egypt

Continuing religious intolerance in Egypt during 2006 led Christian Copts to seek the protection from the government, and the Baha'i minority to fear that government's active role in their torment.

The Copts are Egyptian Christians, mostly Orthodox, who trace their roots to Pharaonic peoples and their conversion to the arrival of St Mark in the first century AD. Nationally, Copts make up around 5–10 per cent of the population but are more concentrated in Cairo and Alexandria and comprise an estimated 18–19 per cent of the population in southern Egypt. They face state discrimination in such areas as university admissions, public spending, military promotions and required authorizations for the building or repair of churches. Islamist attacks on Copts have led the latter to fear legalization of Egypt's largest opposition force, the Muslim Brotherhood. April 2006 knife attacks on Copts outside churches in Alexandria led to sectarian violence.

Whereas *Shari'a* law recognizes Coptic Christians as 'people of the book', no such tolerance exists for the tiny Baha'i community of 500–2,000. Baha'i is a religion with roots in Shia Islam that emanated from Persia in the nineteenth century. Because the Baha'i believe that God's word is passed to humans through an ongoing series of revelations, it clashes with Islam's view that the Prophet Mohammed's revelations were the final ones. Currently, many Baha'i believers in Egypt are denied birth certificates and the identification required to open bank accounts or enrol their children in school, and their marriages are not recognized. The Egyptian

government is appealing a court ruling from April 2006 that allows Baha'i to have identity cards listing their faith. A related government report in October 2006 argued that Baha'is must be 'identified, confronted and singled out so that they can be watched carefully, isolated and monitored in order to protect the rest of the population as well as Islam from their danger, influence and their teachings'.

Morocco: Western Sahara

In 2006, Morocco continued in its refusal to allow a referendum in Western Sahara that might end the long-standing impasse with the Saharawis in that occupied land.

The Saharawis of Western Sahara are traditionally nomadic herders, now largely urbanized, of mixed Berber, Arab and black African descent. They speak a dialect of Arabic called Hassaniya. In 1975, the colonial ruler Spain ceded Western Sahara, which is rich in phosphates, fisheries and suspected offshore oil, to Morocco and Mauritania. That same year the International Court of Justice (ICJ) found that neither had legitimate claims to territorial sovereignty over the region. The Saharawi opposition, the Polisario Front, fought both countries. Mauritania withdrew in 1979, ceding its claim to Morocco, against whom the rebels fought for 16 years with Algeria's support. Of a population of around 250,000, some 160,000 Saharawis fled to refugee camps in southern Algeria, where they remain today. The conflict ended with the introduction of UN peacekeepers in 1991, and the expectation that there would be a referendum on self-determination in accordance with the 1975 ICJ ruling and subsequent UN resolutions.

Morocco has consistently refused to allow a referendum and, in October 2006, the UN Security Council extended the 15-year-old UN peacekeeping mission for a further six months. Following a May 2005 crackdown by Moroccan authorities, a September 2006 UN report leaked to the press raised concerns about Saharawis suffering police brutality, torture, lack of freedom of expression or due process. Nevertheless, Moroccan ally France blocked proposals to include these concerns in the latest UN resolution prolonging the peacekeeping force. A controversial July 2005 fishing agreement between the EU and Morocco, pending approval by the European Parliament, would allow EU fishing vessels to catch in occupied Western Sahara's rich coastal waters.

Central Africa

Angola: Cabinda

Hopes of progress to end the conflict over the oil-rich enclave of Cabinda faded in that latter half of 2006 as the government sidelined a civil society organization representing the minority population.

The Bakongo people of Central Africa make up around 14 per cent of Angola's population, and the preponderance of the 300,000 people of the northern Angolan province of Cabinda. Cabinda is separated from the rest of Angola by the sliver of the Democratic Republic of Congo that runs to the Atlantic. Though tiny in size and relative population, the area represents an estimated 60 per cent of Angola's vast oil reserves.

The natural resource has raised the stakes for Cabindan efforts to achieve self-determination that date back to 1961. With the end of Angola's civil war in 2002, fighting in Cabinda between separatists and the Angolan army intensified, resulting in widespread human rights abuses against Cabindans. From March 2006, an umbrella organization, the Cabinda Forum for Dialogue (FDC), entered into discussions with the government. In July 2006, the government banned one element of the FDC: Cabinda's only human rights organization, Mpalabanda. In August one Cabindan rebel leader signed a separate peace with the government that was disavowed by other Cabindan factions. The head of Mpalabanda was arrested in September 2006 and released one month later, pending trial for 'instigating, inciting and condoning crimes against the security of the state'. Chevron, the largest oil operator in Cabinda, conceals the amount they pay to the Angolan government. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) criticize the oil giant for contributing to graft that only fuels resentment among the impoverished Cabindan population.

Burundi

In 2006, war-torn Burundi had reason to hope that it could finally end decades of mutual atrocities between its Hutu majority and Tutsi minority as the last rebel group signed up to a peace agreement and transitional justice mechanisms were being developed to help the country process its tortured history.

The population of Burundi is 85 per cent Hutu, 14 per cent Tutsi and 1 per cent Twa. Although Tutsi pastoralists generally enjoyed privilege in pre-colonial

Right: Election materials stockpiled in the warehouse of the Independent Electoral Commission. The Democratic Republic of Congo's first multi-party elections in over 40 years were held in July 2006. Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures

times, colonialism and political manipulation following the country's independence in 1962 sharpened ethnic differences, and these eclipsed other social divides. Successive Tutsi military regimes oversaw several massacres of Hutu, notably in 1972, when between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutu were killed and 300,000 forced to flee the country. The assassination of a newly elected Hutu president in 1993 sparked an uprising that resulted in 100,000 Tutsi deaths; the Tutsi-dominated army killed tens of thousands of Hutu in retribution. Fighting continued throughout the decade, exacerbated by the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda. Throughout, the small Twa minority of forest dwellers suffered at the hands of both Hutu and Tutsi fighters.

The 2000 Arusha Accords created a transitional government. By 2003, one of two hold-out Hutu militias had signed up to the peace agreement, and UN peacekeepers arrived in 2004. In 2005, Burundians voted overwhelmingly to approve a new power-sharing constitution with ethnic quotas for representation in government, administration and the military. In August 2005 elections, Pierre Nkurunziza and his Hutu-dominated party, a former rebel faction that allegedly committed massive human rights abuses, took control of every branch of government. The election campaign saw intra-Hutu rivalries overshadow the Hutu-Tutsi divide. In April 2006, the government deemed the situation in Burundi safe enough to lift a midnight-to-dawn curfew that had been in place since 1993. Amid halting progress on political reform, tempered by continued reports of government torture and other human rights abuses, the last hold-out Hutu militia signed a peace agreement in September 2006. Despite a limited amnesty granted to these rebels, the government and UN are moving forward with creation of a special war crimes court and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

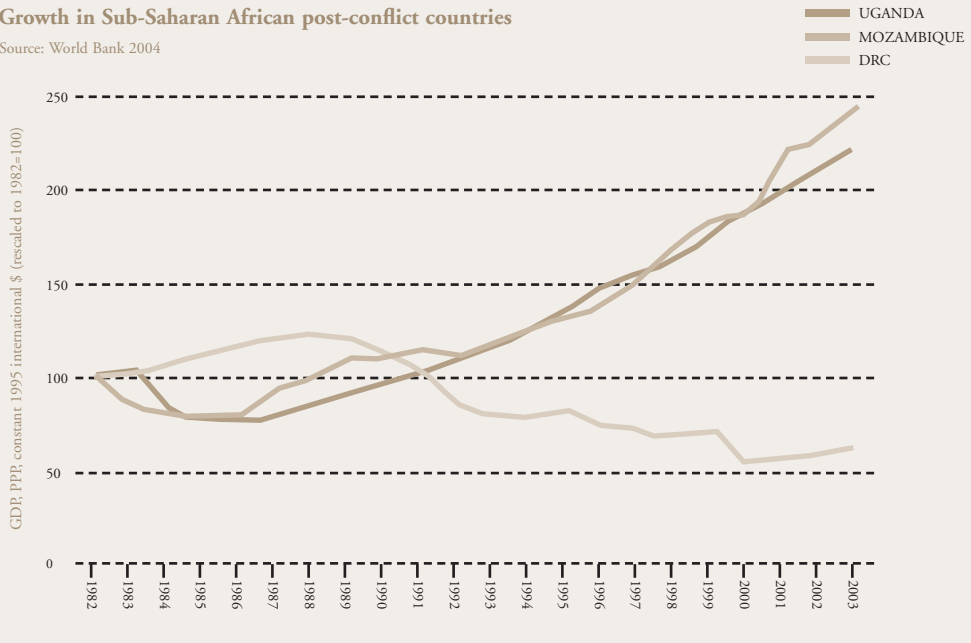
In 2006 the first democratic elections in nearly 40 years offered some hope that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) might finally





Growth in Sub-Saharan African post-conflict countries

Source: World Bank 2004



overcome ethnic divisions long exploited by domestic and foreign powers for political and material gain. Against the backdrop of deep ethno-linguistic divides, a devastated economy and the militarization of much of the country, the democratic election of incumbent President Joseph Kabila and his party's strong showing in elections to the weak national Parliament may have signalled a new chance for the DRC, but by no means assured its peaceful future.

The DRC is a geographically diverse country the size of Western Europe, with a population of almost 60 million made up of hundreds of ethno-linguistic groups. Throughout its history of brutal exploitation as a personal fiefdom of Belgian King Leopold II from 1881 until 1908, Belgian colonial rule until independence in 1960, and its plundering by US-backed dictator Mobutu Sese Seko during the Cold War years, the territory's ethnic diversity has been manipulated to serve the interests of those seeking to control its tremendous wealth of natural resources, including rubber, timber, gold, copper, cobalt, coltan and diamonds.

Following the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda, many Hutu extremist perpetrators joined hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees who feared retribution in eastern DRC (then still known as Zaire). From there, the militants, with the support of

Mobutu, launched attacks on the new Rwandan government as well as on Congolese Tutsi, the Banyamulenge. In 1996 Rwanda and Uganda sent their own forces into Zaire, and backed the rebel Laurent Kabila in a westward sweep through the vast country. In the process, Rwandan government forces and Kabila's forces killed thousands of Hutus, combatants and non-combatants alike. Mobutu fled as Kabila took the capital Kinshasa in May 1997 and renamed the country DRC. However, Kabila quickly fell out with Rwanda and Uganda, and in 1998 these countries sponsored rebel movements to invade the DRC anew. The rebels also had the support of Burundi, while the Kabila government had that of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Seven nations were now involved and, because their various roles were often rewarded with natural resource concessions, they had little incentive to withdraw. Fighting continued despite a July 1999 ceasefire agreement and deployment of an understaffed UN peacekeeping mission (MONUC) in 2000. A study by the International Rescue Committee found that between 1998 and 2004 nearly 4 million people in the DRC – the equivalent of the entire population of Ireland – died as a result of the war.

Laurent Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 and his son, Joseph Kabila, assumed the presidency. Under international pressure, he entered into a

power-sharing government with rebel factions and civil society in July 2003. Violence in the north-eastern Ituri province flared, despite the improved situation in Kinshasa, and French-led European Union (EU) peacekeepers intervened in 2003 to quell the violence in and around Ituri's capital Bunia. In July 2003 and October 2004 the UN Security Council bolstered MONUC to a nearly 17,000-strong force, and gave it a new mandate to protect civilians 'under imminent threat of violence'. In April 2006, the EU approved deployment of additional peacekeepers to provide security for UN-administered national and local elections foreseen by the 2002 peace agreement that led to the power-sharing government.

Over 30 presidential candidates emerged during 2006 in a campaign marred by incitement to ethnic hatred. According to Human Rights Watch, in May 2006 one of DRC's four vice-presidents engaged in anti-Tutsi rhetoric at a campaign rally for Joseph Kabila in the North Kivu town of Goma. Another vice-president, and Kabila's main rival for the presidency, Jean-Pierre Bemba, was a leading Ugandan-backed warlord in north-eastern Congo prior to entering the government in 2003. He stands indicted in the Central African Republic in connection with a rebellion there, and is widely believed to be under investigation by the International Criminal Court. He based much of his campaign on xenophobic rhetoric aimed at casting doubt on Kabila's Congolese identity. When results were announced on 20 August 2006, Kabila had 45 per cent to Bemba's 20 per cent, requiring a run-off. The announcement sparked three days of violence between their supporters in Kinshasa that killed at least 23 people and required intervention by UN and EU peacekeepers.

The run-off election was held on 29 October and, despite violence in part of Ituri province, international observers deemed the voting to be largely free and fair. Kabila won with 58 per cent of the vote, mostly from the Swahili-speaking east, creating concern about his ability to overcome the divide with the Lingala-speaking west. Bemba lost his challenge of the results in court and, despite earlier violent outbursts by his supporters in Kinshasa, Bemba announced in late November that he would respect the election results.

The years of war since the 1996 and 1998 invasions have resulted in a proliferation of militias

and a spread of lawlessness, particularly in the eastern DRC provinces of Ituri, North and South Kivu, and Katanga. The Kinshasa government and invading forces alike have established ethnically based militias, including local Mai-Mai defence forces, usually organized along tribal lines. Armed factions were encouraged by their sponsors to prey on local populations for subsistence and looted goods. The larger context of DRC's chaos and natural resource wealth combined with marauding, predatory militias has sharpened various ethnic conflicts, put the country's minority groups at risk and resulted in staggering levels of sexual violence against women.

Inter-communal violence has gone well beyond that associated with the divide between Hutu and Tutsi/Banyamulenge, most prevalent in North and South Kivu. Tensions between Hema and Lendu peoples, incited during colonial times and the Mobutu era, have destabilized Ituri province. As the power-sharing government was taking shape in 2002–3, clashes between heavily armed Hema and Lendu militias and massacres of civilians resulted in at least 50,000 deaths and sparked EU intervention. Despite a demobilization programme, extended in July 2006, there were reports in September 2006 that splintered Hema and Lendu militias were re-arming and engaging in new clashes. In Katanga province, allies of Kabila engaged in violent intimidation of the opposition, consisting largely of the Luba people who have roots in Kasai province.

As MRG found in 2002, even Twa or Bambuti (pygmy) peoples living deep in the forests of eastern DRC had become targets of various militias, including that of Jean-Pierre Bemba. Militias target the Twa in order to deprive rivals of Twa hunting skills and knowledge of forest paths. Twa women have been singled out for rape due to the belief that sleeping with them confers special powers on the rapist.

All of DRC's many minority groups, and especially women, remain under threat from an unprofessional government army and the many militias. Their greatest hope rests with efforts to overcome the country's corruption, mal-governance, impunity and lack of state control in the east.

Rwanda

During 2006, the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government continued to pursue policies of playing down ethnicity as a means

of overcoming the minority's endangerment – all too evident in the 1994 genocide that claimed an estimated 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu victims at the hands of Hutu nationalists. Rwanda's population consists of 85 per cent Hutu, 14 per cent Tutsi, and 1 per cent Twa.

Critics claim that its bans on 'divisive' parties and organizations are designed to serve RPF power interests. In February 2006, Rwanda's first post-genocide president, Pasteur Bizimungu – a Hutu – lost an appeal against his 2004 conviction for 'criminal association' in his attempt to form a rival party in 2002. Human Rights Watch documented flaws in his first-instance trial.

In the course 2006, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) continued to hear top-tier genocide cases, while Rwanda's traditional *gacaca* courts continued to try large numbers of less prominent cases. In January 2007, the Rwandan cabinet voted to abolish the death penalty. If approved by parliament, the move will allow countries which object to the death penalty to extradite genocide suspects back to Rwanda. Abolition of the death penalty was also a prerequisite for the transfer of some ICTR cases to Rwanda's national court system. The ICTR prosecutor still hadn't taken up serious allegations of war crimes committed by the RPF's predecessor, the Rwandan Patriotic Army, during the genocide. The prosecutor faced the implicit threat that if he did so the government would rescind all cooperation with the tribunal.

The indigenous Twa people of Rwanda, numbering an estimated 25,000–30,000, remain on society's margins, disadvantaged in education, health care and land rights. The government of Rwanda has threatened to cut off all assistance to the Twa and their organizations if they continue to consider themselves as a distinct people.

Uganda Acholi

In Uganda during 2006, the search for an end to the brutalizing war of the north gathered pace, as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), notorious for abducting children and turning them into killers, signalled a willingness to negotiate following its leaders' indictment in 2005 by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Under British colonial rule the Acholi people of northern Uganda were favoured for service in the police and army. When Milton Obote seized power in 1966, four years after independence, he surrounded himself with Acholi and other northerners, and repressed southern peoples. Idi Amin, himself a northerner from the minority Kakwa group in the West Nile area, unleashed horrific retribution against the Acholi from 1972 to 1979. Rebel leader Yoweri Museveni, a southerner, came to power in 1985, and brought increasing stability and prosperity to Uganda, with exception of the north.

For 20 years, the Acholi have been victimized by the LRA. The rebel group receives support from the Sudanese government and are led by an erratic Acholi named Joseph Kony. The LRA has abducted an estimated 25,000 children over the years, forcing them to commit heinous atrocities against the Acholi people. In response, Museveni's government has forced 1.4 to 1.9 million civilians into camps where they remain prone to attack by the LRA and the national army alike, and unable to grow their own food. The ICC issued arrest warrants for Kony and four other LRA leaders on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in February 2005. Through 2006, the LRA has insisted on immunity from prosecution in exchange for an end to the fighting. Acholi opinion on the matter is divided. Negotiations are continuing despite the international indictments; the discussions included a meeting between Kony and UN Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland.

Batwa

In July 2006, the Uganda Land Alliance for Coalition of Pastoral Civil Society Organizations warned that the few thousand Batwa (Twa) of Uganda are in danger of extinction. The organization's report warned of starvation and loss of social cohesion among desperate Batwa who lost their homes in the Bwindi Impenetrable Game Park when this became a World Heritage Site for preservation of endangered mountain gorillas in 1992.

East Africa Ethiopia

The efforts of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to control separatism in Ethiopia appeared to be unravelling in 2006, as various ethnic movements drew inspiration from government repression and

lack of democratic participation.

Ethnic liberation movements toppled former Communist dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991, and Meles Zenawi, the leader of the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, set about organizing the state as an ethnic federation, albeit one in which he would lead co-opted representatives of other ethnicities under a single-party umbrella: the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front. This proved a particularly difficult undertaking as Tigreans comprise only around 6 per cent of the Ethiopian population. Prime Minister Meles's re-election in flawed May 2005 balloting only deepened the resentment of other ethnic groups.

This was especially true of Ethiopia's Amhara people, about 30 per cent of the population of the country. The Amhara are prominent in the political opposition and suffered in the government crackdown on protests at election fraud, which resulted in at least 193 deaths and 763 injuries.

In February 2006, the government arrested thousands of Oromo – an ethnic group making up approximately 30–50 per cent of the country's population – following its protests of the election irregularities called for by the rebel Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in the south of the country. In September, two senior Ethiopian military officers defected to the OLF.

In December 2006, the Ethiopian military, backed by the USA, took on the Islamist alliance in neighbouring Somalia, driving it from control of the capital Mogadishu on 28 December. Ethiopia is the principal backer of the weak Somali transitional federal government headed by President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi justified the invasion by citing national defence interests, claiming that the Islamists had been infiltrated by al-Qaeda. Sabre-rattling by the Union of Islamic Courts – calling for a holy war on Addis Ababa, and overt support for the Ogaden self-determination groups – raised tensions in 2006. Two wars have already been fought over the Ogaden region in the South-East of the Ethiopia, where the majority of the population is ethnic Somali. Although Ethiopia has vowed to withdraw its forces completely from Somalia, it is unclear whether the promised AU peacekeeping mission will transpire. Without Ethiopian military support, a question-mark remains over the TFG's ability to hold onto the territory seized in December's offensive.

Meles also faced rebellions among smaller ethnic minority groups. The Anuak – traditional hunters, farmers and fishers – make up approximately 1 per cent of the country's population, and for centuries have lived in the area that is today's Gambella region of south-western Ethiopia. The Anuak have lived alongside, and in competition with, Nuer pastoralists. Under the Mengistu regime, the Anuak faced considerable suppression as the authorities seized land and forcibly conscripted Anuak villagers for service in the army and on collective farms. Some 60,000 peasants, mostly lighter-skinned 'highlanders' from other parts of Ethiopia, were also forcibly resettled in Gambella. Tensions have risen as competition for land and water has intensified.

In recent years, the Meles government has also moved against the Anuak, with human rights activists reporting murder, rape and torture. The government has increased the military presence in the area following attacks by militants. It argues that the military action is targeted at the rebels – but Anuak leaders claim that civilians are also being targeted. In April 2006, there were reports that the Ethiopian army was cooperating with the Sudan People's Liberation Army to disarm Anuak along the border. Amnesty International reported in May 2006 that, in the previous two and a half years, the Ethiopian government had detained 900 Anuak opposition members without trial, though it had released 15 former senior officials in December 2005. Tensions rose again in June 2006 when attackers thought by aid workers to be Anuak militia members ambushed a bus travelling from Addis Ababa to Gambella, killing an estimated 14–30 civilians. In the immediate aftermath, water and power were cut to Gambella town, and Ethiopian troops and highlander militias enforced a curfew. In September 2006 a Dutch humanitarian NGO reported that more than 44,600 internally displaced persons – Anuak, Nuer and Highlander alike – were living in camps and in dire need of assistance.

Oil is another factor in this dispute. Although in May 2006 the Malaysian oil company Petronas announced that its first test well in the area had proved barren, land use rights in Gambella remain contentious, and efforts to discover oil could yet intensify the struggle for control of the region.

Horn of Africa: Pastoralist peoples

Across the Horn of Africa, traditionally nomadic herders are suffering from competition for land

Below: The outline of a body in the village of Jowara, which was attacked by Janjaweed militia during a series of raids in April 2006. Over 109 people from this and other villages between D'jmenez and Jowara were massacred over a period of two days. Tim A. Hetherington/Panos Pictures

worsened by drought and regional conflict. In turn, their dire situation is increasingly driving them into conflict with each other, as well as non-pastoralist peoples.

Traditionally pastoral peoples of Kenya, including Borana, Gabra, Maasai, Pokot, Samburu, Somalis and Turkana, have long seen the land available for their herds diminish. Under British colonialism, whites carved out large estates in fertile areas that had earlier been used as communal grazing lands. At independence in 1963 much of this land made its way into the hands of Kenyan elites. The establishment of national parks and game reserves also pushed nomadic herders out of their traditional lands. For example, the Endorois community has been evicted from the Lake

Bogoria area in the Rift Valley, and the Monchongoi forest on the Laikipia Plains, to make way for a game reserve and ruby mining. The community has not received adequate compensation for their eviction, nor has it benefited from the tourism in the reserve.

In recent years, the area of pasture lands available to pastoralists has been further reduced through a failure of multiple rainy seasons widely attributed to global warming. As pastures and water have become scarcer, pastoralist peoples of Kenya and neighbouring states have come into conflict over what little remains.

A March 2006 cattle raid launched by the Pokot people of north-western Kenya into Uganda sparked a response from the Ugandan army, and at least four civilians were killed. A UN official in Uganda observed that, 'the first aim is normally not to steal animals, but to monopolize the water source'. By May, in response to the killing of at least 19 people in cattle raids over the course of the year, the Kenyan government had launched an operation aimed at collecting up to 30,000 illegally held weapons in



western Kenya. Local Pokot and Samburu people claimed that the operation was undertaken without adequate consultation and had sparked the flight of thousands of pastoralists across the border.

Pokot cattle raids continued in 2006, driving thousands of Samburu into camps, and have been marked by widespread murder and rape. In October, Samburu pastoralists pressed claims to ancestral rights to graze their cattle on private farms in Laikipia and government forces moved in to forcibly evict the herders. Similarly, Maasai herdsmen drove cattle into the Masai Mara game reserve to protest what they claimed was a corrupt allocation of 4,000 acres of park land to an elite Maasai developer.

In October, MRG and the Centre for Minority Rights Development brought together women from various pastoral communities in Kenya to discuss common problems. The participants underscored the lack of women's representation within their communities, and the lack of adequate representation of pastoral peoples in the Kenyan government.

In south-western Tanzania, in May 2006, the government began the eviction of hundreds of pastoralists from riverbeds in Mbeya in order to prevent further environmental degradation caused by their cattle. Likewise, following poor March–May rains across the region, competition for land in southern Ethiopia has led to conflict. In June, Oxfam reported that clashes between Guji and Borena peoples over pasture land had resulted in at least 100 killings and the displacement of thousands.

MRG is supporting an initiative to establish a regional council of traditional pastoralist elders from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It is hoped that, as water and available pasture land become scarcer, elders can work together to resolve conflicts and determine equitable sharing of what resources there are.

Somalia

According to MRG's People under Threat calculation (Table 1, Reference section, pp. 118–23), Somalia is the most dangerous place in the world for minorities. Throughout 2006, tensions between Ethiopia – the main backer of the weak transitional federal government (TFG) – and an alliance of Islamist parties escalated. The US-backed Ethiopian military offensive broke the grip of the Islamist alliance, but ushered in the prospect of further instability and conflict, in a country

which has been without a central government since 1991. Ominously, foreign actors – in the Middle East, and the Horn of Africa region, as well as the US – have become increasingly involved in this round of the fighting. However, the roots of the conflict are to be found in inter-clan rivalries.

According to the International Crisis Group, the Union of Islamic Courts became a platform for powerful Hawiye clan, after many sections of this influential grouping felt excluded from the TFG. The TFG's head President Yusuf is from the large Darod clan – as are many in the higher ranks of the TFG. After December's crisis, the president faces calls from the international community to form a more inclusive government. As the fighting spread, many Somalis fled. Pastoralist peoples already suffering hardship from the twin disasters of drought and heavy flooding in 2006 – have been especially vulnerable. By October 2006, UN officials estimated that 1000 refugees a day were arriving in North-Western Kenya. In early 2007, the Kenyan government shut its border with Somalia, drawing strong criticism from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Humanitarian agencies continue to warn that lack of access to refugees is exacerbating an already dire situation.

Sudan: Darfur

Despite a peace deal hailed in May 2006 and a subsequent UN Security Council resolution that called for the deployment of a robust peacekeeping force, the latter part of the year saw an intensification of fighting, mass killings and displacements in the Darfur region of Sudan. The year 2006 also witnessed the continued unwillingness of the international community to intervene on behalf of targeted black civilians, whom many observers regard as victims of an active genocide.

In Arabic, Darfur means 'home of the Fur', who are black Nilo Saharan sedentary farmers. The western region is also home to other black tribes, notably the Masalit and the Zaghawa, who are semi-nomadic pastoralists, as well as various Arab camel- and cattle-herding peoples. Worsening drought over the past 25 years created tension between pastoralists and agriculturalists in competition for land and was intentionally exacerbated by the Sudanese government. Its divide-and-rule tactics injected mounting frictions with racism, and spurred nomadic Arabs to band together to form Janjaweed

militias that targeted black Africans. In response, beginning in the 1980s, the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, and other, smaller ethnic groups began forming their own militias. Whereas the North–South war in Sudan that lasted from 1983 to 2005 pitted Arab Muslims in the North against black Christians and animists in the South, all groups involved in the Darfur conflict are predominantly Muslim.

In early 2003, Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa militias engaged in skirmishes with government forces. Following initial setbacks for the Sudanese army, then still preoccupied with fighting in southern Sudan, the government turned to the Janjaweed. Heavily armed by Khartoum and backed by the Sudanese air force, the Janjaweed launched devastating assaults against the opposing militias over the course of 2003 and 2004. It also targeted Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa villages, killing thousands and displacing tens of thousands within Darfur and across the Sudanese border to Chad. In February 2004, the International Association of Genocide Scholars labelled the atrocities in Darfur ‘genocide’, followed unanimously in July 2004 by the United States Congress.

Although the UN and many governments sought to avoid this term – and the associated obligation to intervene in accordance with the 1948 Genocide Convention – those who did adopt the finding, including US President Bush in September 2004, proved equally unwilling to take effective action. Instead, the international community vested its hopes in a small, under-funded and under-equipped African Union (AU) peacekeeping force that first deployed in August 2004. By September 2005, the AU force had increased to 7,000 soldiers but, despite its best efforts, was still ill-trained, ill-equipped and incapable of protecting Darfuri civilians under attack in an area the size of France.

A January 2005 peace agreement between Khartoum and south Sudanese rebels envisioned power-sharing and broad autonomy for the South, but excluded Sudan’s other disgruntled regions, including Darfur. As the death toll in Darfur rose into the hundreds of thousands, and atrocities such as the systematic rape of black Darfuri women by Janjaweed forces became well established, the International Criminal Court announced in June 2005 that it was launching an investigation into alleged violations of international humanitarian law.

The international community touted as a major breakthrough an AU-brokered peace agreement for

Darfur signed in Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2006. Yet only one of the three main Darfuri rebel factions – that most closely aligned with the Zaghawa people – signed the agreement with Khartoum. Absent the agreement of the other two main factions, for the most part closely aligned with Fur and Masalit tribes, violence intensified in the weeks following the agreement.

With increased violence came new calls for the UN to take over peacekeeping responsibilities in Darfur, notably by AU heads of state meeting in July 2006. Sudan’s leader, Omar Bashir, rejected the idea out of hand, and that same month the Sudanese air force resumed attacks on Darfuri villages for the first time since the May peace agreement.

At the end of July, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed deployment of a UN force of 24,000 and, on 31 August, the Security Council approved a smaller but robust force of 17,000. However, at the insistence of China and Russia – tied to Khartoum through oil development and weapons trafficking – deployment of the force hinged on Sudan’s invitation. By November 2006, President Bashir had repeatedly made it clear that no such invitation would be forthcoming. Instead the AU agreed to extend its force through the end of the year.

In October a former Janjaweed fighter confirmed to the BBC that the militias were under direct control of the Khartoum government, which had directly ordered the killing and raping of civilians. He alleged that Sudanese Interior Minister Abdul Rahim Muhammad Hussein frequently conveyed such instructions personally to Janjaweed fighters.

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) released a report in October 2006, which found that the catastrophe in Darfur could have been prevented if early warning signals had been recognized and acted on. The report said that instead the UN and its member states had repeated in Darfur many of the same failings as in their response to the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In particular, policy-makers had failed to take account of Khartoum’s long-standing efforts to foment ethnic division in the region.

Southern Africa **Zimbabwe and South Africa**

Zimbabwe’s economy continued its implosion during 2006, and the Ndebele people, prominent among the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and distrusted by the government of

President Robert Mugabe, continued to bear the brunt of his regime. The Ndebele make up around 16 per cent of the country's population. Shortly after his 1980 election, following the ouster of white supremacist Ian Smith's regime, Mugabe summoned nationalism among the Shona people – comprising about 70 per cent of the population – to consolidate his power and sideline his greatest liberation rival, the Ndebele tribesman Joshua Nkomo. It is estimated that Mugabe's 'Gukurahundi' pogrom in the Ndebele heartlands of Matabeleland and the Midlands from 1983 to 1987 resulted in 10,000–20,000 killings. In recent years, Mugabe has discriminated against opposition supporters, and thus many Ndebele, in distribution of food aid necessitated by his economic policies. In October 2006, Mugabe's party spokesman resurrected bitterness over Gukurahundi, saying he had no regrets about the atrocities.

In 2006, it was estimated that 85 per cent of Zimbabweans lived in poverty and in 2007 the country's inflation rate has reached 1,600 per cent. An estimated 3–5 million impoverished Zimbabweans have fled the former breadbasket of southern Africa to South Africa, where they have become targets of resentment and face the prospect of grim migrant holding camps.

South African whites have expressed nervousness that Jacob Zuma, a leading candidate to succeed current President Thabo Mbeki, has not sufficiently distanced himself from Mugabe's policies of land redistribution, which, beginning in 2000, stripped some 4,000 white Zimbabweans of their farms and precipitated Zimbabwe's economic meltdown. Many among South Africa's black majority are impatient with the pace of economic improvement after Apartheid, and the continued white ownership of most fertile land. They clamour for land redistribution, although in Zimbabwe most confiscated land ended up in the hands of elites or unskilled and largely unsuccessful subsistence farmers, all regime supporters

Botswana

In December 2006, the Basarwa – also known as the Khoesan or San – in Botswana won a historic legal victory when the country's High Court ruled that the Basarwa had been illegally forced out of their ancestral home in the Central Kalahari game reserve. The panel of three judges ruled 2–1 in favour of the Basarwa. Judge Mpaphi Phumaphi

said the treatment of the remaining Basarwa in the game reserve amounted to 'death by starvation', as they were prohibited from hunting, or receiving food rations. Judge Unity Dow ruled that the government had 'failed to take account of the knowledge and culture' of the Basarwa when it expelled them. However, the verdict also said the government was not obliged to provide basic services to anyone wishing to return to the reserve, nor had it acted illegally by terminating essential services in the game reserve.

The Basarwa are believed to have lived in area covered by the Central Kalahari game reserve for 20,000 years, but their hunter-gatherer lifestyle and unique traditions have come under intense pressure in modern Botswana. The government claims that the Basarwa have voluntarily moved from the Kalahari into resettlement camps, where the authorities are better able to provide education and health services. But campaigners maintain they have been forcibly resettled. Before the court case, hunting in the game reserve was prohibited and Basarwa caught breaking the law were arrested. But the High Court ruled that it was illegal to refuse to issue the Basarwa with special game licences. It also found that the refusal to allow the Basarwa into the Central Kalahari game reserve was unlawful and unconstitutional. There are persistent allegations of harassment and ill-treatment of the Basarwa at the hands of the police and wildlife officers. Critics also say the resettlement camps have exposed the Basarwa to HIV/Aids – Botswana has one of the highest rates of infection in the world.

Concerns about the Basarwa's treatment were also highlighted by the UN Committee tasked with monitoring the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which Botswana ratified in 1974. In its 2006 response to a country report submitted by Botswana, the Committee recommended that the government resume negotiations with the residents of the reserve with a view to finding a 'solution acceptable to all'. The Committee also noted the difficulties experienced by poor people – many of whom belonged to the Basarwa – accessing law courts, because of high court fees, and the problems facing children who did not belong to the majority Tswana tribe, because education was not sufficiently tailored to minority linguistic and cultural needs. ■