



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Uganda - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 February 2011**

### **Information on witchcraft practices in Uganda which involve the sacrifice of children and the use of their body parts in rituals in the years 2008 – 2011**

A *Guardian* article on ritual murders in Uganda states:

“Uganda has been shocked by a surge in ritualistic murders and human sacrifice, with police struggling to respond and public hysteria mounting at each gruesome discovery. In 2008 more than 300 cases of murder and disappearances linked to ritual ceremonies were reported to the police with 18 cases making it to the courts. There were also several high-profile arrests of parents and relatives accused of selling children for human sacrifice. In January this year the Ugandan government appointed a special police taskforce on human sacrifice and announced that 2,000 officers were to receive specialist training in tackling child trafficking with the support of the US government. Since the taskforce was set up there have been 15 more murders linked to human sacrifice with another 200 disappearances, mainly of children and young adults, under investigation.” (The *Guardian* (6 September 2009) *Child sacrifice and ritual murders rise in Uganda as famine looms*)

A *Freedom House* report on Uganda states:

“In 2008 and 2009, the police investigated a largely unexplained upsurge in deaths that included many children, which they linked to human sacrifices associated with witchcraft.” (Freedom House (6 April 2010) *Countries at the Crossroads 2010: Country Report – Uganda*)

The 2010 *US Department of State* country report on Uganda, in a section titled “Children”, states:

“Reports of the ritual sacrifice of children increased during the year. For example, on March 7, police in Pallisa District arrested Issa Wayibi, Sebastian Musana, Bbumba Aramazan, and Daudi Byendala for the ritual killing of a girl the previous day in Butesa subcounty. An investigation was ongoing at year's end. On April 16, police in Gulu District arrested John Okech and six of his family members for allegedly participating in the ritual killing of a one-year-old girl in Awach subcounty. An investigation in the case was pending at year's end. The December 2008 case of businessman Godfrey Kato Kajubi, charged with the ritual killing of 12-year-old Joseph Kasirye, remained pending in court. On November 13, a court in Masaka adjourned the case to February 2010. Kajubi remained on remand along with Moses Musisi, Umar Kateragga, and Mariam Nabukeera, who confessed to killing the child on Kajubi's orders. There were no reported developments in the 2007 ritual killing of a two-year-old child in Iganga District by family members Laston Muyaga, Jane Magezi, Elizabeth Kantono, and Aidah Kasubo. On January 7, the Kampala High Court in convicted and sentenced Ssenoga Setuhwa to 16 years in prison for stealing and selling a two-year-old child for sacrifice in 2006. Setuhwa was reportedly paid 100,000 shillings (\$52).” (US Department of State (11 March 2010) *2009 Human Rights Report: Uganda*)

A report from the *UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*, in a paragraph headed "Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution" (paragraph 27), states:

"While noting the draft Action Plan against Child Sacrifice as well as the establishment of the Anti-Human Sacrifice and Trafficking Task Force, the Committee expresses its concern at the increased number of cases of 'child sacrifice' or abuse which has been identified as a major child protection gap." (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (22 October 2010) *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Uganda (Advance Unedited Version)*)

An *Associated Press* report states:

"The practice of human sacrifice is on the rise in Uganda, as measured by ritual killings where body parts, often facial features or genitals, are cut off for use in ceremonies. The number of people killed in ritual murders last year rose to a new high of at least 15 children and 14 adults, up from just three cases in 2007, according to police. The informal count is much higher 154 suspects were arrested last year and 50 taken to court over ritual killings. Children in particular are common victims, according to a U.S. State Department report released this month. The U.S. spent \$500,000 to train 2,000 Ugandan police last year to investigate offenses related to human trafficking, including ritual killings. The problem is bad enough that last year the police established an Anti-Human Sacrifice Taskforce. Posters on police station walls show a sinister stranger luring two young girls into a car below bold letters that call on parents to 'Prevent Child Sacrifice.'" (Associated Press (5 April 2010) *Ritual sacrifice of children on rise in Uganda*)

A report on a *BBC News* investigation into alleged human sacrifice in Uganda states:

"The Ugandan government told us that human sacrifice is on the increase, and according to the head of the country's Anti-Human Sacrifice Taskforce the crime is directly linked to rising levels of development and prosperity, and an increasing belief that witchcraft can help people get rich quickly. In the course of our investigation we witnessed the ritual torching of the shrine of a particularly active witch-doctor in northern Uganda by anti-sacrifice campaigners. The witch-doctor allowed ceremonial items including conch shells and animal skins to be burned in his sacred grove after agreeing to give up sacrifice. He told us that clients had come to him in search of wealth. 'They capture other people's children. They bring the heart and the blood directly here to take to the spirits... They bring them in small tins and they place these objects under the tree from which the voices of the spirits are coming,' he said." (BBC News (7 January 2010) *Battling Uganda's witch-doctors*)

An *Irish Times* article on ritual murders in Uganda states:

"Ritual murders are on the rise in Uganda and, according to a US state department report released this month, children are commonly the victims. The number of people killed in human sacrifice increased from three in 2007 to 25 in 2008 and 29 in 2009, say the Ugandan police. Of those 29, 15 were children. They include Moses Ogen, aged one. In April last year, he was found in Paromo village in Gulu district with his face mutilated. In August, the castrated body of Solomon Otiti, aged three, was discovered in Apac, northern Uganda. Both were the apparent victims of ritual sacrifice. They are just a few of the many cases. A study conducted by Uganda's ministry of gender, labour and social development late last year revealed that most

cases of child sacrifice do not find their way to the police. And even when they do, the perpetrators are rarely punished. Caroline's alleged killers were released on a police bond of four million shillings (€1,400). And the factory owner, although he went into hiding, is back in Jinja, untouched by the authorities. By the end of January this year, 125 suspected perpetrators of human sacrifice had been arrested and 54 taken to court, charged with criminal offences such as murder and kidnap. However, there have yet to be any convictions, despite the fact that Uganda's 1957 Witchcraft Act prohibits acts of witchcraft which involve threatening others with death." (Irish Times (1 May 2010) *Uganda's child sacrifice scourge*)

A report published by the *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting* states:

"Mukisa is a 3-year-old boy, whose genitals were cut off during a ritual sacrifice, after he was abducted by a neighbor. He was found by his mother, in the bush by their house, fainted in a pool of blood. Now he's back home from the hospital, after a precarious surgery saved his life; he barely walks, with a catheter hanging from his body as he tries to heal from a bad infection that he recently suffered. Mukisa's father looks at his child with deep, endless sadness; when he wonders what life will be for his only son, he sees no friends, no hope, no future. Mukisa's mother left him after the incident and now he's alone, facing something he doesn't know how to handle. When I ask him what happened to the man who mutilated his son in such a horrific way, his voice gets weak: 'When Mukisa was found in the bush, the police came; they found the genitals in the courtyard of my neighbor, a traditional healer, but someone from his family sold his land and went to the police with the money. Then he was released.' Gruesome stories like this one are frequent. Child sacrifice in Uganda is a rampant phenomenon that emerged about five years ago, and has slowly embedded itself within traditional customs, although it is not genuinely related to the local culture. The claim that it falls within Ugandan 'cultural beliefs' is just an excuse used by so-called traditional healers to justify their crimes, and by the Ugandan government to avoid taking action. The government tries to minimize the magnitude of the problem, as politicians are afraid of losing votes in a country where witchdoctors yield such influence as to define election results." (Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (16 April 2010) *Uganda: Child Sacrifice Not a Cultural Issue*)

An article published by the Ugandan newspaper *New Vision* refers to the motives of persons who allegedly create the demand for human sacrifice as follows:

"What is happening now goes to prove that a combination of 'Blackboards' and personal desires to force and change a course of nature have become terrible ingredients for society and for the once free child. Who would have imagined that economics could play a part in human sacrifice? Yes, it does - through demand. The industry is being fuelled by the blackboards' escalating demand for the products, both directly and indirectly. Their desires have been diversified into their daily activities: wealth expansion - the businesses, factories, mills, hotels, farms, houses; work promotion, civil service, military, the Police, management, ministerial, personal enhancements, education, manhood, fertility, love, long life; power and politics, the list is endless. The direct demand stems from those 'Blackboards' who knowingly order for humans or their parts to be delivered for their desired results. These blackboards will do anything, at any cost, in an attempt to meet their goals." (New Vision (10 February 2010) *Uganda: Ritual Murder for Wealth - is It a Reality or Folktale?*)

*New Vision* frequently publishes reports of the murder of children for ritual purposes, including the following representative selection:

A *New vision* report on the arrest of family members of a child victim states:

“The Police in Buikwe district have arrested six family members, including two grandparents, over allegations that they connived and sacrificed their three-year-old daughter in a ritual murder. The suspects are David Mukulu, Jennifer Night, 40, Laubeni Mande, 48, Yuda Nakacho, 28, John Baptist Serwajjo, 70 and Agnes Namanya, 52. The Police identified the deceased as Evra Mudaali a daughter of Ronald Serwajjo, 24 and Rosemary Anyango, 21, both residents of Bugoba village in Nyenga sub-county. The suspects, who are also residents of Bugoba village, were arrested on Friday following the discovery of Mudaali's mutilated body that had been dumped in Bugoba village at the shores of Lake Victoria.” (New Vision (20 June 2010) *Uganda: Six Held Over Child Sacrifice*)

See also a *New Vision* article which states:

“Three-year-old Evra Mudaali on June 13 joined the growing list of people who have been brutally murdered in ritual practices across the country. Her parents, Ronald Serwajjo, 24 and mother Rosemary Anyango, 21, residents of Bugoba village in Nyenga sub-county, Buikwe district, had left her with her grandmother, Agnes Namanya, 52. It was Mudaali's grandmother who allegedly led her to the family shrine where she was sacrificed. Five days later, her body was found dumped at the shores of Lake Victoria with a hole in the armpits. Her heart and the left ear were missing.” (New Vision (25 June 2010) *Uganda: Child Sacrifice - Police Forms Special Unit, Pastors Watched*)

A *New Vision* article on the death of a two-year-old boy states:

“Parts of the mutilated body were retrieved by the Police and taken for examination. The missing parts included the left hand, leg, intestines and private parts and his head was clean shaven. The officer in charge of crime at Mukono Police station, Mark Odong, yesterday said no arrests had been made due to scanty clues. He asked area LCs to collaborate with the Police to make sure that all the suspects behind the sacrifice are arrested. Cases of child sacrifice were rampant the past years, especially in Mukono district. Residents suspect the boy was murdered by traditional healers.” (New Vision (15 November 2010) *Uganda: Two-Year-Old Boy Killed in Ritual Murder*)

A *New Vision* article on the sentencing of a convicted child murderer states:

“Kintu Mapeera, the killer of five-year-old Edrine Muguluma has been sentenced to 70 years in prison. Muguluma, was a victim of the rampant child sacrifice perpetrated by people seeking riches and success. The boy was kidnapped from his home and murdered in Lugala, Rubaga Division in Kampala, on July 20, 2006. His body was later found in a shallow grave at Masanafu.” (New Vision (27 November 2010) *Uganda: Court Jails Child Murderer for 70 Years*)

## References

Associated Press (5 April 2010) *Ritual sacrifice of children on rise in Uganda*

<http://www.lexisnexis.com>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

BBC News (7 January 2010) *Battling Uganda's witch-doctors*

<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/newsnight/8441813.stm>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

Freedom House (6 April 2010) *Countries at the Crossroads 2010: Country Report – Uganda*

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/modules/publications/ccr/modPrintVersion.cfm?edition=9&ccrpage=43&ccrcountry=199>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

The Guardian (6 September 2009) *Child sacrifice and ritual murders rise in Uganda as famine looms*

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/sep/06/uganda-child-sacrifice-ritual-murder/print>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

Irish Times (1 May 2010) *Uganda's child sacrifice scourge*

[http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/weekend/2010/0501/1224269451810\\_pf.html](http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/weekend/2010/0501/1224269451810_pf.html)

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

New Vision (27 November 2010) *Uganda: Court Jails Child Murderer for 70 Years*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201011290134.html>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

New Vision (15 November 2010) *Uganda: Two-Year-Old Boy Killed in Ritual Murder*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201011160062.html>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

New Vision (25 June 2010) *Uganda: Child Sacrifice - Police Forms Special Unit, Pastors Watched*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201006281045.html>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

New Vision (20 June 2010) *Uganda: Six Held Over Child Sacrifice*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201006211174.html>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

New Vision (10 February 2010) *Uganda: Ritual Murder for Wealth - is It a Reality or Folktale?*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201002110100.html>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (16 April 2010) *Uganda: Child Sacrifice Not a Cultural Issue*

<http://pulitzercenter.org/blog/untold-stories/uganda-child-sacrifice-not-cultural-issue#>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (22 October 2010) *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Uganda (Advance Unedited Version)*

[http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country/print.shtml?cmd\[113\]=x-113-281254](http://www.ein.org.uk/members/country/print.shtml?cmd[113]=x-113-281254)

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This is a subscription database

US Department of State (11 March 2010) *2009 Human Rights Report: Uganda*

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/af/135982.htm>

(Accessed 10 February 2010)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

### **Sources Consulted**

All Africa

Electronic Immigration Network

European Country of Origin Information Network

Google

Human Rights Watch

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

UNHCR Refworld