

KAIROS and Heirs of Justice Press Briefing

Hotel Horizon, Bukavu, South-Kivu DRC

June 26, 2013, 8:00 AM

After introductory remarks presented by Heirs de la Justice...

JIM DAVIS:

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives is an ecumenical coalition of 11 Canadian Churches and Church agencies for social justice in Canada and the Global South. The word "kairos" is a Biblical Greek word that indicates both the time of crisis and moment of opportunity. KAIROS Canada members include the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, the Canadian Religious Conference and several Protestant churches, organizations and agencies. KAIROS' work is in the field of human rights, including the rights of indigenous peoples, as well as ecological justice which includes ecological economics, mining justice and climate justice.

Canadian Churches asked KAIROS to organize a delegation to the east of the DRC to examine gender-based sexual violence and its causes, including conflict minerals. The delegation comprises representatives of the Canadian labor union movement, the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) and the National Council of Churches of Burundi. This delegation of nine people came to assist, show solidarity with, and support their partner, Heirs of Justice, through which KAIROS supports a legal clinic to fight gender-based sexual violence and to offer paralegal training to train fellow women survivors. It is part of the KAIROS Women of Courage program.

After Bukavu, the delegation hopes to travel to Kinshasa to share their observations and touch on their concerns with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Gender, Family and Children; the leaders of the National Conference of Bishops (CENCO) and the Church of Christ in Congo;

and the Canadian Embassy.

I present to you the members of the KAIROS delegation:

- Sister Mary-Ellen Francoeur is a Canadian nun and represents the Canadian Religious Conference;
- The Honourable Justice Peter Lamont is a judge in Canada and represents the Presbyterian Church in Canada;
- The Rev. Marie-Claude Manga is a pastor and represents the United Church of Canada;
- Amelia Torrie is a former schoolteacher and also represents the United Church of Canada;
- Danielle Dubuc is a unionist and represents the Public Service Alliance of Canada;
- Perpetue Kankindi is a representative of the National Council of Churches of Burundi;
- Monica Njoronge is a representative of FECCLAHA, which stands for the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa;
- Ian Thomson, my colleague, is the coordinator for environmental justice within KAIROS;
- And I myself, Jim Davis, am the Africa partnership coordinator for KAIROS.

DANIELLE DUBUC:

We have seen and heard the teaching and empowering force of Heirs of Justice in the healing and transformation of the lives of women whose rights have been violated and who are subjected to sexual violence. We are experiencing a major social change, because these women are standing up and asserting their rights. This change – the equality of women and the respect of their rights – must be supported by governments at every level, as well as ourselves in the international community.

We salute the strength, the courage and the spirit of women who, when their awareness is raised and they are loved, valued and supported, defend their rights and take care of their families and communities. Despite the powerful forces of tradition and patriarchy, they persist

in their journey toward freedom and equality.

We teach women's rights in villages, we've seen how men and boys need to be included in the process so that there can be a gradual process of transformation and mutual support for the common good of the entire community.

The oppression of women, the acts of sexual violence against them are an atrocious and unacceptable reality that must stop.

We have heard from the civil society in Bukavu that incidents of sexual violence are on the rise despite the so-called peace in South Kivu. In addition, those who are raped are increasingly young, sometimes as young as 18 months. We must act urgently to end the violence and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Many people and organizations we met that support women who are survivors of sexual violence are now faced with threats, abductions, or violent attacks. Those who speak and appeal on the rights of the individual must be protected and their safety must be guaranteed by the authorities – police, military, and governments at every level.

Defenders of human rights themselves have told us that for their protection, non-violent actions by the local community against the forces of terror are as important as any formal protection.

In addition, crimes against human rights must be fully investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice.

KAIROS is particularly concerned about the unsolved murder case of Pascal Kabungulu, former Executive Secretary of Heirs of Justice, who was murdered in front of his family in 2005 for his work on human rights and in exposing illicit mining operations.

REV. MARIE-CLAUDE MANGA:

We have learned that mining is an important part of the South Kivu economy, but it fails to uphold the rights or benefit the local population in many cases. We recognize that a Canadian company, Banro, is the largest industrial mining operation in South Kivu at the moment. We are deeply concerned that yesterday Banro denied us access to its Twangiza mine and to the relocated Cinjira community despite prior arrangements made by our local partner.

We have heard from community members and civil society organizations that the Twangiza mine does not benefit local communities as originally promised. Community leaders indicate that Banro failed to engage in a genuine process of community consultation and has instead relied on the signing of agreements with the elites at the local and provincial levels. The community is concerned about **local** hiring, the **local** procurement of agricultural products and services, and that **local** income is not being invested in the right places. Members of the community want the situation to change!

Therefore, we support the recommendations of the Congolese civil society, namely:

1. Contracts should be negotiated and signed with full consultation with affected communities, which would then give a clear and transparent picture of the impact on their lives and their environment.
2. Displaced people must be relocated to new viable sites where they can live in dignity and pursue their agricultural work.
3. It is desirable that the taxes on mining companies by the national government be fair and equitable in order to benefit both the national and provincial level, but also the grassroots community.
4. Hiring members of the community should be assured, including supervisory positions, all while creating training opportunities.

In addition, we recommend the coexistence of industrial and small-scale mining operations in

the DRC. We encourage industrial operators to work with government authorities in the designation of artisanal mining areas, where local miners can expand and organize themselves into associations or cooperatives.

The KAIROS delegation prepares recommendations for the various authorities and stakeholders, on the basis of our discussions with communities and the civil society in South Kivu.

We commend the Church in South Kivu for the attentive support and guidance it continues to give to survivors of gender-based violence and all those who offer their legal, medical or other help and services.

We urge them to do more and recommend they reinforce the Tamar Campaign, a campaign that breaks the silence on all forms of gender-based violence. The campaign is from 2 Samuel 13:1-22 – an account of the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon.

We encourage religious leaders to engage themselves in a large interfaith and interreligious collaboration with the goal of working hand in hand to overcome violence and to provide care for survivors of sexual violence and children born of rape.

PERPETUE KANKINDI:

We urge the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Gender, Family and Children to bring radical action against gender-based sexual violence by implementing all the decisions taken by the Heads of State and Government in Kampala, Uganda from 15 to 16 December 2011. We urge them to accelerate the implementation of Decisions 2, 7 and 8 taken to this effect.

- Decision 2: The domestication of the three protocols, with particular attention to the protocols on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women;
- Decision 7: Launch of the campaign against sexual and gender-based violence "Zero

Tolerance Now" and follow-up activities; and

- Decision 8: Establishment and strengthening of special tribunals, sessions and procedures on gender-based sexual violence.

JIM DAVIS:

We urge the Minister of Justice to open the trial of the case of Pascal Kabungulu, which was transferred to Kinshasa without any progress despite the eighth anniversary of the death of Pascal approaching next month.

Provincial and local elections should be held as soon as possible. Through the election of female candidates, we believe that women become more active in the political process and advance their rights.

We demand immediately for the army and police to provide protection to human rights advocates in the South Kivu and across the country.

We urge the national government to publicly report all income received from mining, oil and gas companies, according to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). In addition, we recommend that the government make public all mining contracts so that the Congolese people to be fully aware of the terms granted to companies to develop the underground resources of the DRC.

On June 30th, the day of independence of the DRC, the Canadians who are part of the delegation will return to Canada to share their results with Canadians, Churches and governments. The KAIROS delegation has several recommendations to bring back to Canada.

We call on the Canadian government and Canadian churches to support the civil society in the DRC that is working to bring an end to sexual violence and to build a culture of peace. In particular, we encourage the government to support the legal clinic of the Heirs of Justice, which provides support and legal services for victims of gender-based violence.

We call on all people of faith in Canada to support the Congolese people in their prayers and in their hearts. More acts of faith, solidarity and support are needed. We must not forget the Congolese people and their suffering, to which the international community has become insensitive or the incredible acts of courage that happen here every day.