

The War in Africa No One Seems to Care About

Just three weeks ago, rebel soldiers came into the town of Mayba, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and rounded up 70 people, many of them Christians. Once the people were brought inside a Protestant church, the rebels beheaded everyone with machetes. It was a senseless slaughter meant to intimidate everyone in the region.

The Open Doors ministry, which serves persecuted Christians, said it took weeks to bury the dead in Mayba because of insecurity in the area. The rebels are part of the Allied Democratic Forces, or ADF, which has been spreading mayhem in the country for many years.

“We’ve had enough of massacres,” a church leader told Open Doors. “We don’t know what to do or how to pray.”

Most Americans don’t know anything about the conflict in Congo. The three-year war in Ukraine has dominated headlines. As many as 430,000 soldiers and civilians have died since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

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The conflict in Congo deserves our attention, too, yet the mainstream media has been strangely silent about it. The war is far away—more than 5,000 miles due south of Ukraine. In the DRC, which is three times the size of Texas, rebel soldiers have clashed with government forces and vulnerable civilians have been caught in the crossfire.

It is estimated that 5.4 million Congolese people have died since this conflict began in 1998. But few Americans know about it, and it’s complicated to explain. The war has been

fueled by tensions between ethnic tribes, political corruption and efforts to control Congo's valuable mineral wealth—including so-called "conflict minerals" such as tin, gold and cobalt.

I saw the war up close and personal a few weeks ago, when I spent time with a Congolese pastor who has become a close friend.

Udjasiri Wakahasha leads a Pentecostal church in the city of Goma, near the border with Rwanda. Several months ago, a group of women from the Kivu region in the northeastern sector of the DRC came to Goma seeking safety. All of them had been raped by rebel soldiers. The terrorists killed some of the women's husbands. And the parents of one of the women were burned alive by the rebels.

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Udjasiri and his wife, Josephine, rented a house for the traumatized refugees, and they raised the money to feed them. But a nightmare began in late January when ADF soldiers marched into Goma. The electricity was turned off, internet connection was disrupted and the rebels began terrorizing the city.

The rebels even broke into a women's prison, raped the inmates and then burned the prison with the women inside. More than 150 women died in that brutal incident on Jan. 27.

Concerned about his own family and the refugee women he was sheltering, Udjasiri decided to flee to a different part of the city to find safety. They hid in an abandoned house as gunfire and bombs rained on Goma. Then, after an eerie silence settled over the area, one of the women refugees asked if she could go outside to see what was happening.

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Her name was Dorcas, and she had fled to Goma with her six young children. After she left the house, a deafening boom shook the house. Udjasiri knew a bomb had struck nearby. When he walked outside to see the damage, he found Dorcas's body in a pile of rubble. She had been killed by the explosion.

"We all cried. The children cried," Udjasiri told me. But before they could process the tragedy, rebels knocked on the door and began interrogating him.

"They thought I was a government soldier. They refused to believe I was a pastor," Udjasiri told me. The rebels held a gun to Udjasiri's head. But eventually they believed his story, and they left him alone. Udjasiri took his family and all the refugees back to his house, where they have been staying ever since.

Things are calmer in Goma today, and the electricity is restored. But the rebels remain in the city and residents have no idea what the future holds. Meanwhile, Udjasiri is doing everything he can to find a home for the six children who lost their mother in the blast.

As you pray for an end to the conflict in Ukraine, and for peace in Israel, please take time to pray for the forgotten people of Congo. Pray for an end to the rapes and the beheadings. And pray that the world will notice what is happening in this remote part of the globe—and that the world's leaders will care enough to bring this war to an end.

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