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State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 - Uganda

The UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW committee) noted some positive developments in Uganda, for instance in regard to new legislation prohibiting domestic violence, human trafficking, female genital mutilation and sexual violence against women during conflict. A law criminalizing female genital mutilation (FGM) was signed in March. Perpetrators can face sentences of up to ten years in jail, increasing to life in cases where the victim dies. The BBC reported that it is still practised by some Sabiny, some Karamojong sub-groups and Pokot in eastern Uganda, as well as Nubi of West Nile. In its October observations, the CEDAW committee welcomed the law but expressed concern at the 'continued prevalence of this harmful practice'. In addition, a number of other serious concerns relating to women's rights remained.

In May MRG published the results of research into violence against Batwa women in Uganda. One hundred per cent of Batwa women responding to individual interviews reported having experienced some form of violence; for the majority, the violence was ongoing or had occurred in the past 12 months. This is significantly higher than national averages.

Before it was pushed out of northern Uganda in 2005, 20 years of conflict involving the LRA had forced an estimated 1.5 million people to leave their homes. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported in June that 240,000 remain in camps.

Vulnerable people, including older women and those with disabilities, faced particular difficulties in returning home. Community support on which they would traditionally have relied has been disrupted, and their home areas lack security and health services. In the camps themselves, they are particularly at risk of sexual violence, the prevalence of which is 'inordinately high' in Uganda according to the CEDAW committee.

Karamoja in north-east Uganda is home to the Karamajong, a traditionally pastoralist ethnic group badly affected by the local impact of climate change. More frequent cycles of drought in an already harsh environment have led to ever greater competition for scarce resources, and cattle-raiding and the violence accompanying it have increased. Raids by armed bands of cattle rustlers have led to heavy security force responses in which civilians have been killed. In January at least 13 people, including children and women, were reportedly killed during a military operation against gangs in the area; in April at least half of the ten deaths confirmed by the OHCHR in similar circumstances

were children.

In March a fire destroyed the Kasubi tombs, a world heritage site in Kampala and the burial site of the kings of the Baganda, Uganda's largest ethnic group. President Yoweri Museveni was met by protests when he tried to visit the scene, and his guards reportedly shot and killed at least three people.

Moves to begin exploiting oil reserves at Lake Albert fuelled tensions around the proposed distribution of the eventual proceeds from resource extraction. Most of the drilling is set to take place in zones belonging to the Bunyoro kingdom, and some of its members, as well as environmental activists, have demanded greater participation in the process and more transparency about the government's agreements with oil companies.

Bombs in a restaurant and in a crowd watching the football World Cup final killed at least 76 people in Kampala on 11 July. Somali Islamist group al-Shabaab claimed responsibility, reportedly in retaliation for Uganda's participation in the AU military force in Somalia. Following concerns about the impact of the attacks on relations between Uganda's Muslims and Christians, President Museveni publicly cautioned Ugandans not to collectively blame Somalis for the bombing. Two Kenyan activists working on the cases of suspects detained in relation to the events were themselves arrested in September. One was released, but the other, Al-Amin Kimathi of the Nairobi-based Muslim Human Rights Foundation, remained in detention.

The 2011 presidential campaign opened in November, with President Museveni seeking another five-year term. He was returned to office in February 2011.

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