

Kony2012 and the background

60 million (!) people viewed the internet-campaign Kony2012 and the newspapers reported about it. More than 26 years Kony was just a little notice in the media and now he is in the top news.

One of the reasons seems to be the fact that 100 military advisors have been allocated to Uganda since October 2011 and are planned to stay for one year. The NGO "Invisible Children" has now created the action „Kony 2012“ with the aim to make Kony worldwide so famous that he can be caught till the end of 2012 and be brought to the International Court in Den Haag; and to threaten other war criminals. So far the remarkable facts (as astonishing.)???

The campaign shows typical American characteristics (Hunt Geronimo! Hunt bin Laden! Hunt Kony!) and one is astonished about its effectivity and simple-mindedness. Because it is clear that the elimination of Kony is dependant on political-state-military interests and is outside of the possibilities of any NGO however present it is in the media. Even the comparison with the Hitler-demon is used (in the video and with the action day 20th of April, Hitler's birthday), a strategy which was several times insufficient.

The campaign is concentrated on Kony and does not say anything about the present or future Uganda. You can't even find a clue if the donations (or better profit by selling campaign-material) – is used for the rehabilitation of the former Kony-ridden area in Uganda.

After Idi Amin, now Uganda gets famous for Kony. But „Invisible Children“ is now also well known - may it be so.

We will not take part in this campaign but we can use the rising new interest to show the present Uganda, to point at our projects (especially the Child Protection Amuru-project fits in the context) and to give informations to those newly interested.

Background

The phenomenon „Kony“ has a long history shaped by developments inside Uganda and also by foreign states. Historically the North of Uganda is a region which was integrated into the Ugandan state by British colonialism (around 1900) though the population belongs rather to the ethnicities of Southern Sudan. For the army the British recruited mostly men from Northern Uganda who normally exceed Southerners in body size and matched better to the military size. Effect was that the Ugandan Army after Independence comprised mostly of Acholi, the tribe Joseph Kony also belongs to. In the civil wars under Idi Amin and Milton Obote this army committed terrible crimes and cruelties against the population of Southern Uganda, a situation which strained further the relationship between North and South.

When present-day President Museveni with his National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in January 1986 after a 5 years fight, the soldiers of the army fled with their arms to Southern Sudan. According to their protagonists, NRM took power too early. Their original plan was to politicise the whole population and to empower them for a democratic form of government, the „Movement“ in a so-called „protracted people's war“. They succeeded in the South but did not reach the Northern areas. The already economically disadvantaged North also lost the important income of their men who used to serve in the army.

Already in August 1986 started the first military uprising against Museveni in the north under Alice Lakwena, an aunt of Joseph Kony, and her „Holy Spirit Movement“. They

nearly conquered Kampala but was finally put down in 1987. Alice Lakwena died in a refugee camp in Kenya.

But resistance continued. Joseph Kony collected the remnants of the Holy Spirit Movement, referred to the Ten Commandments and formed the Lord's Resistance Army. Surprisingly he fought to a lesser extent against government than against the own ethnicity, destroyed Acholi-villages, massacred their inhabitants and recruited his rebels mostly from Acholi-children. With the abducted girls he wanted to create a new nation. Arms, room for strategic withdrawal and finance he got from the Islamic government of Sudan which was since the 1950s engaged in a civil war with the mainly Christian Southern Sudan. The main rebel group of Southern Sudan, the SPLA under John Garang was led by John Garang, a university mate of Museveni in Tanzania. He was supported against Khartoum by Museveni due to old friendship and ideology.

Since the civil war in Sudan ended in 2005 Kony lost this support and had finally to flee to Congo respectively Central African Republic where he continues being a warlord.

Domestically the population of Southern Uganda was since 1986 not much interested about the cruel events in the north: one was busy with rehabilitation, was anyway afraid of the Northerners and had not much pity with those who had oppressed them for long years as soldiers of the national army.

The Acholi themselves suffered of a psychological drama. On the one hand they wanted to support "their son" Joseph Kony against Museveni and the NRM-government, on the other hand they were afraid of his methods of recruiting their children and procurement of food through robbery in their villages. Since 1996 the population fled from the LRA to IDP-Camps (Internally Displaced People) organised by the government's army UPDF. About 1,2 million people lived about 20 years in these camps and were fed by the World Food Organisation. A whole generation grew up who can't take care for themselves and lost knowledge of traditional skills and ethic values. Since some years there are resettlement programs bringing them back to their villages, a quite difficult project which needs besides funds also psychological, technical and agricultural guidance and advice.

Contrary the methods of Museveni and the national army UPDF were not really inspiring confidence. Too often "suspicious villages" were attacked by military power – even bombing – and their population dislodged. During the "Operation Iron Fist" when the UPDF attacked LRA-Camps in Southern Sudan and LRA at the same time attacked the IDP-Camps, every person found outside the camps was suspected to be a rebel and shot dead.

There were many attempts of peace talks with involvement of Acholi leaders, local priests and well respected personalities, truce and amnesty was offered by government but all these attempts failed due to different reasons. The signing of a peace agreement in Juba 2006 failed because Kony demanded for the abrogation of the arrest warrant of the International Court in Den Haag against him and twelve of his commanders which made them internationally wanted war criminals.

The Acholi in the diaspora (mainly in England, US and Canada) organised themselves and tried to better the situation from outside the country, but they also failed because of the problem to condemn Kony on the one hand and to present Museveni as the main culprit of the disaster.

Since Southern Sudan is an independent state development co-operation and business is booming in the new country (catchword: oil !) and at the same time international interest in Northern Uganda is raising since the roads to the new capital Juba (about 150 km distance from Ugandan border) go through Uganda. Also in Uganda oil was found near the Congo border and peace in these regions is now of international interest. This also could explain that the United States sent 100 military advisors in October 2011 to Uganda to help catch Kony.

The initiative „Invisible Children“ has mainly humanitarian aims and wants to end the catastrophic situation through publicity and denunciation. Unregarded by the public hundreds of NGOs are working since years in the region to help to reintegrate the traumatised children and to rehaulitate the area economically. Also Ugandan government has many programmes to organis the resettlement successfully. But all these efforts need support for a long time, whether Kony is caught or not. Hopefully all these initiatives will bring about peace and development and not exploitation and environmental degradation.

The Austrian-Ugandan Friendship Association is engaged in a project since 2009, the “Child protection project Amuru-District” with the support of “Rettet das Kind Österreich” and supports the since 4 years on-going rehabilitation project of GEZA (Gemeinnützige Entwicklungszusammenarbeit des Arbeiter-samariterbundes) since 4 years in Northern Uganda

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