

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”. Bible, Jeremiah Ch. 29v13

UNLESS THE LORD GUARDS THE CITY ...

REMEMBER THE DR CONGO

By Guy Kasongo



The Democratic Republic of Congo (The DRC, formerly Zaire) is a big country in Central Africa, with an area of 2.34 million sq km (905,354 sq miles) and a population of about 70 million. The DRC has endured political and social turmoil since gaining independence from Belgium in 1960ⁱ. It is striving to recover from over a decade war; in which nearly 10 million died mostly through violent killing, rape, starvation and disease. Former rebels joined a power-sharing government and Eastern regions are still plagued by militia violence. The DRC hosts the U.N.'s largest peacekeeping missionⁱⁱ The *Second Congo War*, also known as *Africa's World War* and the *Great War of Africa*, began in August 1998 in the DRC and officially ended in July 2003. It is the largest war in modern African history, as it directly involved eight African nations, as well as about 25 armed groups. By 2008 the war and its aftermath had killed 5.4 million people, mostly from disease and starvationⁱⁱⁱ, making the Second Congo War the deadliest conflict worldwide since World War II^{iv}. Millions more were displaced from their homes or sought asylum in neighbouring countries^v; It was reported that 1,000 people died daily in 2004 from easily preventable cases of malnutrition and disease^{vi}. In early 2000, the U.N. Development Program reported that on average, the majority of the population

lived under \$1 a day. This is likely to have worsened so far, as a result of instability due to continuous war. According to mapofworld's web site, “all the poorest countries of the world have GDP (Gross Domestic Product) less than \$700 with The DRC having the lowest GDP of \$300”^{vii} In 2007, the World Bank reported a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of \$140. Currently, the socio-economic disaster in the DRC is likely to affect the whole Central African region, since it is surrounded by a total of 9 bordering countries.

Religion and beliefs in DR Congo

Catholicism	37%
Protestantism	32%
Islam	12%
Other Christian	11%
Non specified & Unaffiliated	5%
Indigenous Religion	3%

Pew Research Center (2013)^{viii}

In general, Congolese believe themselves to be subject to a number of unseen agents and forces. Most indigenous communities recognize a high god, and many attribute to him the role of creator; otherwise, he has few specific characteristics beyond that of ultimate cause.

Far more significant are ancestors, who are believed to continue playing a part in community life long after their death. Consequently, people are required to speak ritualistically to ancestors so that the dead could look favourably on their descendants' activities. They address and relate to their deceased elders in much the same way that they relate to their living ones.

Indigenous communities also believe that *nature spirits* live in particular places, such as rivers, rocks, trees, or pools, or in natural forces such as wind and lightning. A typical practice involving a nature spirit in much of northern Congo is the commonplace tossing of a red item in a river before crossing it, particularly in places where the water is rough or turbulent. Thus placated, the spirit will refrain from stirring up the waters or overturning the boat.

Nature spirits play a minor role in negotiating everyday life compared

with that played by witches and sorcerers. Witches are individuals who possess an internal organ giving them extraordinary power, generally malevolent power. Sorcerers are the possessors of nonhereditary powers that can be bought or acquired. A sorcerer might be consulted and paid to provide a medicine or object that strengthens the client in the hunt (or, in contemporary life, in taking an exam) or that brings misfortune on an enemy.

The most dangerous place for women

The United Nations named the DRC as the *most dangerous place on earth to be a woman*. Despite this worrying factual observation, sexual violence has become a tool used by the militias to destroy communities. In fact, about 1,100 rapes are reported every month, with countless more going unheard^{ix}. This violence is so widespread that *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported that 75% of rape victims they treat are in the DRC. Physically, the women are often subjected to traumatic physical injuries or HIV. The result is a population ravished by disease and malnourishment. The U.N. estimates 1.5 million people are internally displaced and 45,000 die each month. In an article titled *Silence is the Enemy*, Eve Ensler was quoted in *Discover Magazine* as saying: “Nothing I have heard or seen compares with what is going on in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where corporate greed, fueled by capitalist consumption, and the rape of women have merged into a single nightmare. *Femicide*, the systematic and planned destruction of the female population, is being used as a tactic of war to clear villages, pillage mines and destroy the fabric of Congolese society”. Dr Denis Mukwege – the ‘Rape Surgeon’ of Congo - was awarded the European Union's Sakharov Prize in 2014, after receiving his first of three nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. He was also On May 28, 2015, awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by Harvard University on May 28, 2015.^x He wrote:

“It was that year that our first rape victim was brought into the hospital. After being raped, bullets had been fired into her genitals and thighs.

I thought that was a barbaric act of war, but the real shock came three months later. Forty-five women came to us with the same story, they were all saying: "People came into my village and raped me, tortured me." Other women came to us with burns. They said that after they had been raped, chemicals had been poured on their genitals. I started to ask myself what was going on. These weren't just violent acts of war, but part of a strategy. You had situations where multiple people were raped at the same time, publicly - a whole village might be raped during the night. In doing this, they hurt not just the victims but the whole community, which they force to watch. The result of this strategy is that people are forced to flee their villages, abandon their fields, their resources, everything. It's very effective.^{xi}

As far as war and subsequent socio-economic instability are concerned, it is now notorious that The DRC is also victim of its great reserves of natural resources: copper, diamond, rivers, natural parks, etc. It has now been established that some multinational chains producing mobile phones, laptops, iPod and similar items are directly or indirectly involved in the long devastating war that has killed and displaced millions of people. By all measures, the DRC is potentially a prosperous country. Its fertile land is ideal for growing and minerals are abundant. But the displaced population puts the agriculture sector in disarray and occupying armies control the extraction of minerals by forcing miners to work in deadly conditions for low wages. The armies then sell their plunder to international buyers with annual profits estimated at \$144 million.

Increase Awareness

There are some growing signs of encouragement around the world over the Congolese bloody conflict. For example, Canadian companies are being asked to disclose audit trials for their raw materials supplying chains. A non compliance to these measures could lead to refusal of government loans and stock dismissal from the Canada Pension Plan. The *Congo Conflict Minerals Act* called on the United States to cease activities that fund armed groups and contribute to human rights violations. According to one *Enough's* report quoted by Ashley Dresser in *Minnesota Daily* (May 26, 2009) "the three main militia groups

operating within the Congo are able to garner an estimated \$44 million a year by trading four main minerals: tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold. They do this by taking control of mining operations, abusing the workers and extracting bribes and taxes from the transporters, international buyers and border control". Hence slogan like: "*With your cell phone purchase, you may be implicit in the recruitment of child soldiers, indiscriminate rape and widespread violence*", "*Come Clean 4 Congo*" or "*Silence is the Enemy*"!

The Minerals of the DR Congo

An eminently mining country, the DR Congo is the centre of numerous exploitations of most diverse metals in a multitude of mines and quarries. Its soil harbours a wide variety of mineral species with facies of often very high qualities. The worked deposits are distributed over massifs bordering, to the south, east and north-east, a vast sedimentary central basin. Thus, in counterclockwise sense, one encounters successively, from south to north: diamondiferous exploitations of Kasai (Mbuji-Mayi, Tshikapa), as well as a few copper deposits (Tshinama, Lubi); the copper-bearing arch of southern Katanga, also rich in cobalt and uranium with the mining centres of Kolwezi (Cu-Co), Likasi (Cu), Kambove (Cu-Co), Shinkolobwe (U) – that provided materials for the atomic bomb –and Lubumbashi (Cu). Not to forget the mine of Kipushi, which yields zinc, copper and germanium. Still in Katanga, when ascending northward, one comes across the tin granite of Mitwaba and the stanniferous pegmatite of Manono. The province of Kivu, enclosing the region of Maniema, is particularly rich in tin deposits (Kalima), often accompanied by columbo-tantalite (coltan). The pegmatite with beryl, the columbite and uranium of Kobokobo is also found here, as well as gold placers of the Mobale river. Conflicts, including the Rwandan occupation in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), made it difficult for the DRC to exploit its coltan reserves. A 2003 UN Security Council report charged that a great deal of the ore is mined illegally and smuggled over the country's eastern borders by militias from neighbouring Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. Austrian journalist Klaus Werner has documented links between multi-national companies like Bayer and the illegal coltan traffic.

A United Nations committee investigating the plunder of gems and minerals in the Congo listed in its final report approximately 125 companies and individuals involved in business activities breaching international norms. In the north of the province of Kivu, there are outcrops of carbonatite of Lueshe, rich in pyrochlores, while at the Rwandan border, the region of volcanos contains lavas in which several new silicates have been discovered. In the north Oriental province of the DR Congo, there is the famous gold exploitation of Kilo-Moto. At the western extremity of the country, to the west of the capital Kinshasa, the Lower Congo encloses a few deposits of zinc and lead vanadates (Kusu-Senge). These huge reserves of minerals are the actual distant causes of the current disaster in Congo. These causes originated from around the 18th/ 19th Century, as well documented by A. Hochschild (2006)^{xii} who states:

"In the late 1890s Edmund Morel, a young British shipping company official working in Antwerp began to notice something that made him suspicious. When his company's ships docked from the Congo, the new colony that the Belgian king Leopold II, had just carved out for himself, they were filled with immensely valuable cargoes of rubber and ivory. Yet when they sailed back to Africa, they carried nothing in exchange. Nothing, that is except soldiers, military supplies and firearms. Horrified, Morel realized that there could be only one source for the lucrative cargo: slave labour on a vast scale. He abandoned his job and swiftly became the greatest investigative journalist of his time. A man of torrential energy and conviction, Morel almost single-handedly made the Congo's slave-labour regime, and the millions of lives it took, into a cause that would unite the whole world."

In order to perpetuate this inhuman and barbaric exploitation of the Congolese People and its natural resources, the neighbouring countries are now being used to fuel war and inflict indescribable sufferings to people – including child labour – in order to have cheap and illegal access to all the natural resources. Rwanda and Uganda are such proxies of choice in order to achieve that goal, hence their impunity from the real perpetrators of those economic crimes.

For more information about DR Congo's minerals and history, go to : http://euromin.w3sites.net/Nouveau_sit_e/gisements/congo/GISCONe.htm

Earthy paradise for savage wolves and hirelings' operations

Obviously, real help can only come from the Lord God, who made the heaven and the earth^{xiii} and the Bible declares:

"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."^{xiv}

In the DRC, people's sufferings have now reached a state beyond any reasonable description; at the same time our good and faithful God still protects His people who earnestly intercede and call upon His holy name for this country. However, spiritually speaking there are in the DRC both a vibrant and biblical Christianity, unfortunately coexisting with a parallel counterfeit version of Christianity that is also very active on the ground. Surely, *the enemy has sowed tares among the wheat*. Thus so many false prophets and teachers are now taking advantage of the current situation to extract dishonest gains from people and market false hope to people in the name of religion.

Contextually, in the event of illness or of misfortune of any sort, the stricken party may consult a *diviner* in order to identify the agent responsible for the affliction. The diviner is a 'specialist' skilled in identifying the social tensions present in the community of the afflicted; *for a fee, he will identify the agent responsible for the individual's misfortune*. Once a diagnosis has been made, the diviner will then prescribe the appropriate cure. From an outsider's perspective, the most striking aspect of this belief and practice is its *determinism* i.e. *there is always a cause behind any misfortune; accidents are virtually unheard of*. Thus, a death is followed by an inquest - even when someone dies of disease in bed at an advanced age - at which the cause of death and the identity of the killer are determined. This 'perfect' environment is the 'key success factor' for deceitful workers in Congo. These are *"like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood, to destroy people and get dishonest gain. They provide false visions, diving lies saying, "thus says the Lord God", when the Lord had not spoken"^{xv}*.

Deceitful Workers/ Money Preachers

Money and the pursuit of vain glory have become the driving force behind so-called 'revival/ healing ministries'. Consequently, people are being severely impoverished from the very ones who are supposed to bring hope and comfort. In fact, the Lord Jesus told the disciples: *" Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give."* Surprisingly, money is now playing such a central role in this so-called revival/ healing ministries. Therefore the Church should now take more seriously Paul's warning: *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves"^{xvi}*. The Lord Jesus Himself foretold that *"false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."^{xvii}* He specifically warned His people to *"Take heed that no one deceives you"^{xviii}*. Sadly, tares are seemingly more visible than crops.

A Call for National Repentance

"You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made [...]; therefore I have made you a reproach to the nations, and a mockery to all countries. Those near and those far from you will mock you as infamous and full of tumult". (Ezekiel 22:4-5)

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land .Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place." (2 Chronicles 7:14-15)

DR Congo has also had a bad record of killing and persecuting those who professed to be Christians. These incidents were also repeated in last decades even in the capital Kinshasa on Feb.16, 1992. Since the independence in June 1960, so many innocent people lost their lives in various tribal conflicts, as a result of sectarian hatred. These facts are more than sufficient to justify a call for *national repentance to God*. Remember, *"Unless the LORD builds the house, they labour in vain*

who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Psalm 127.1).

An eternal weight of glory despite all

In spite of all the above, during my last trip to Congo, I was blessed by meeting with other fellow believers out there. I was also moved by their love for God, their desire to spread the Good News and reach out to the lost souls, despite their desperation caused by both wars and the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). Some serious investors in Congo (including China) have either been reluctant to fulfil their engagements or just intended to renegotiate existing deals; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also joined the debate, only to cause even more distress and misery to the Congolese People. Presently, it all looks even gloomier, as severe consequences of the GFC are now being felt so cruelly. My thoughts and my prayers are with the Congolese People in these difficult times. Surely, the real help to this magnificent country could only come from the Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob!

I will lift up my eyes to the hills-From whence comes my help? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. In the Name of Jesus Christ!

Online Resources:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11108589>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1P79a6HoAo>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=OrWTBzlh_ak

Recommended readings:

- Hochschild, A (2006) King Leopold's Ghost. A Story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa. UK
- Deibert, M. (2013) The Democratic Republic of Congo. Between hope and despair. Zed Books Ltd. NY
- Stearns, JK. (2012) Dancing in the Glory of Monsters. The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa. Public Affairs. NY

Endnotes:

i <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/guides/456900/456977/html/nn1page1.stm>

ii http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

iii "Congo war-driven crisis kills 45,000 a month-study". Reuters. 2008-01-22. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L22802012.htm>

iv Bavier, Joe (2007-01-22). "Congo war-driven crisis kills 45,000 a month: study". Reuters. <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL2280201220080122>

v "Congo Civil War". GlobalSecurity.org. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/congo.htm>

vi "1,000 a day dying in Congo, agency says". Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. 2004-12-10. <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2004/12/10/congo-report041210.html>.

vii <http://www.mapsofworld.com/world-top-ten/world-top-ten-poorest-countries-map.html>

viii Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life / Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa

ix *Rape, war and your cell phone*, in *Toronto Star* - Jun 1, 2009

x https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denis_Mukwege [accessed 08/02/2016]

xi <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21499068> [accessed 08/02/2016]

xii Hochschild, A (2006) *King Leopold's Ghost. A Story of greed, terror and heroism in colonial Africa*. UK

xiii Holy Bible, Psalm 121:2

xiv Holy Bible, Psalm 127:1

xv Holy Bible, Ezekiel 22 and 23

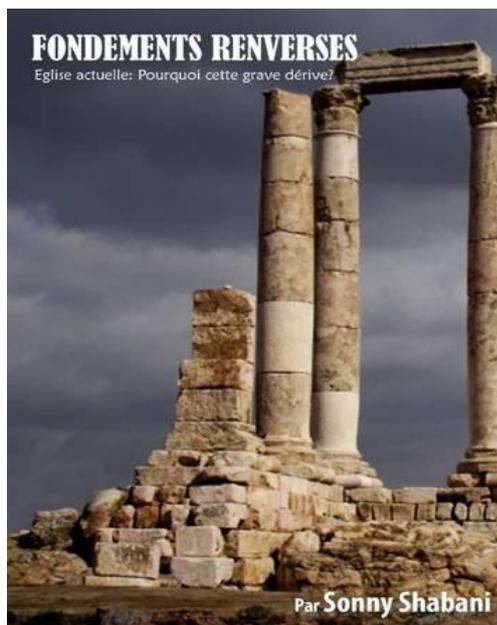
xvi Holy Bible, Acts 20:29-30

xvii Holy Bible, Matthew 24:24

xviii Holy Bible, Matthew 24:4

Guy Kasongo's schedule – all welcome to these free events

- **Thursday, 18/02/2016** and subsequent fortnights thereafter (8:00 pm) – Teaching at Home Bible Study – South-East London. Five minutes' walk from Surrey Quays Station – Contact: bereoa@hotmail.com
- **Saturday, 20/02/2016** (14:00 – 17:00) – Presentation of Pastor Sonny Shabani's new book ***Les Fondements Renversés*** at Archway Methodist Church - Archway Close, London N19 3TD – Contact: bshabani62@yahoo.com
- **Sunday, 28/02/2016** (10:30 am) – Teaching at House of Mercy Christian Assembly – 295 Victoria Dock Road London E16 3BY – Contact: 07543637268 , www.houseofmercy.org



Book now available on: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Fondements-Renverses-Sonny-Shabani/dp/1329479750/ref=sr_1_fkmr0_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1455029848&sr=8-1-fkmr0&keywords=shabani+les+fondements+renverses

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