

Museveni's army: nepotism and Nazism

by K.T. Kabembe

Ugandan Minister of State for Defense Amama Mbabazi has been forced to call Brigadier James Kazini, commander of the Fourth Division of the Ugandan People's Defense Forces, to account for statements attributed to the brigadier in the Human Rights Watch book, *Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda*. The Human Rights Watch book, released on Sept. 18 by the Watch's Children's Rights Project, details kidnappings and murder of children by the 2,000-man Lord's Resistance Army, a group which Museveni's heavily equipped 100,000-strong army has been unable to defeat in 11 years of war in northern Uganda.

The people of the war districts of Gulu and Kitgum have been caught in the crossfire, and it is believed that the war has caused the deaths of up to one-third of the Acholi population which lives there.

The relevant section of the Human Rights Watch report read as follows (pages 58 and 59):

"According to Paulinus Nyeko of Gulu Human Rights Focus, civilians frequently complain of harassment and human rights abuses by the Ugandan People's Defense Force, including robbery, rape, and torture. Since the focus of our investigation was on the abduction of children, we were not able to look into these charges, but we asked military officials if they were aware of them. Lieutenant Bantirinza Shaban, the public relations officer for the UPDF in Gulu, confirmed that he was aware of such allegations, and attributed any such incidents to 'communications problems' stemming from 'ethnic difficulties and language differences.'

"Colonel James Kazini, commander of the UPDF Fourth Division, had a different explanation: he attributed such abuses to the Acholi soldiers, saying: 'If anything, it is local Acholi soldiers causing the problems. It's the cultural background of the people here: they are very violent. It's genetic.' He expressed his regret that Ugandan law prohibits summary justice against soldiers found to have committed abuses: 'We used to have field court martials, and try and sentence them right in the market place. We used to just kill them. But now the President does not allow it. . . . Soldiers accused of misbehaving are taken to the police and charged.'

Kazini's charge of a "genetic" proclivity to violence by the Acholi people, one of the major groups in northern Uganda, caused an uproar in the country, lending credence to fears of a conspiracy to depopulate northern Uganda.

Kazini has denied making such a statement, according to the government newspaper *New Vision* on Sept. 22. However, Yodon Thonden, counsel for the HRW's Children Rights Project, told *EIR*: "We stand by our report. . . . I personally was not present at the interview [with Kazini on May 30, 1997, in Gulu]. But we talked to the researcher. Yes, we definitely stand by the statement."

Kazini's outburst highlights the urgent necessity to bring an immediate halt to British intelligence plans to widen the current low-intensity war in northern Uganda and southern Sudan into a Uganda invasion of Sudan. Kazini's statement indicates the escalating hatreds inside Uganda itself, where the British left a legacy of ethnic tensions between northern and southern Ugandans. If peace is not brought to the north especially, through a peace process that ends the northern Ugandan war, along with London's war in southern Sudan, fears are emerging that the Uganda powderkeg could explode as violently as Rwanda in 1994. This is all the more assured by prolonged conflagration inside Sudan, as per London's script.

Kazini rewarded

This is not the first time that Kazini has found himself in hot water, and the scandals surrounding his name point to the troubles in the UPDF (formerly the National Resistance Army) of London's Yoweri Museveni.

In August 1996, Kazini earned public attention when he incited a lynch mob against two captured "LRA rebels" in Gulu. Releasing the "rebels" to the street, Kazini personally organized Gulu townspeople on the site to stone the two to death. It later turned out that the "rebels" were ordinary civilians with no ties to the LRA.

Then in July 1997, Kazini's name was all over the press when he was called to account by a parliamentary committee for the millions of Ugandan shillings appearing in his personal account in the Ugandan Commercial Bank, at its Gulu branch. With millions flowing in and out like water, Kazini could only offer the explanation that he was holding money belonging to the army in his personal account, which had been confiscated from thieving army paymasters. He claimed that the slush fund under his name was for army expenses. This scandal has yet to be cleared.

However, none of this seems to have affected Kazini's rise in Museveni's army. Kazini is a nephew of Museveni on the dictator's wife's side. Despite howls of "nepotism" among the officer corps, Kazini on Sept. 27 was promoted to the rank of brigadier general—even as he was being called to account for his racist slurs against Acholis.

Such grotesqueries have also failed to warn off the United States from continuing to aid Museveni's London-sponsored marcher-lord force. The United States sent 100 Green Berets to Uganda to allegedly train "peacekeepers." The recruits for the training program were handpicked by Museveni's son Muhoozi, who is not even a member of the UPDF. Those soldiers are now fighting insurgents in western Uganda.