
Interview: Kikaya Bin Karubi

Congo Dialogue Seeks To End Barbarous War

The wars which raged continually in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for more than three years until early in 2001, caused the genocide of millions of Congolese: 2.5 million according to the International Rescue Committee's report this past May; more than 4 million excess deaths from war and disease according to Congo officials.

The United Nations investigative panel was compelled to report that this genocide was a war by proxy, in which "rebel groups" were a cover for invading forces of Uganda and Rwanda stealing Congo's gold, diamond, and other mineral wealth; and Rwanda and Uganda in turn were acting as favored "marcher-lords" for Anglo-American and other global financial interests.

Following the death of Congo President Laurent Kabila in January and a cease-fire in the Spring, EIR on June 1, 2001 published a call by Congo's Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Faida Mitifu, for the invading armies to withdraw at once.

The Minister of Information of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kikaya Bin Karubi, was in Washington at the beginning of November, and was interviewed on Nov. 1 by Lawrence K. Freeman.

EIR: There was recently a meeting of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that took place in Ethiopia. The meeting apparently broke down; there were accusations by the rebel groups against the government. Could you tell us what was the purpose of this dialogue? And, what is the reason that it had to adjourn so quickly?

Bin Karubi: Well, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue is part of the Lusaka peace protocol process. As you may know, in 1999, on the 10th of July, 1999, we signed an agreement in Lusaka [Zambia], to end the civil war in the Congo. And, that cease-fire agreement calls for an Inter-Congolese Dialogue. The cease-fire is holding, and the next step would be for Congolese from all walks of life—belligerents and as well as the opposition groups—to meet around a table and iron out differences in order to look for a way forward. That's the purpose of us meeting in Adis Abeba [Ethiopia] a few weeks ago.

EIR: What caused the meeting to adjourn so abruptly?

Bin Karubi: You know, there is a facilitator, an external facilitator, and, in this case, it's the former President of Botswana, Ketumile Masire, who was appointed by the OAU

[Organization of Africa Unity] to facilitate the Congolese Dialogue. So, it's his responsibility to bring all the participants to the dialogue. And, in this case, we all agreed, in the pre-dialogue that took place in Gaborone, Botswana, to bring in the other interested parties—understand?—civil society, the churches, the lawyers, the medical doctors, the NGOs, as well as Congolese in the diaspora, so that we have an all-inclusive dialogue; to give peace a chance, really, because, we, as a government who believe that, if only those who have weapons, only those who are fighting, only the belligerents—if only the belligerents meet, we will not reach a durable peace. Because we'd be sending the wrong message, saying that, in order to be heard, you must take up weapons against your own country. That's why we said that. We told the facilitator that: We must call an all-inclusive Inter-Congolese Dialogue.

When we got in Adis Abeba, he did not do that. He just had the same people who were in Gaborone at the pre-dialogue, at the dialogue itself. So, we said, "No. As long as you don't bring the NGOs, the religious groups, the civil society, women's organizations, Congolese in the diaspora, we're not going to sit. We don't call this a dialogue." That's what caused problems.

EIR: So, then the conference adjourned after a few days?

Bin Karubi: It was adjourned after a few days.

And, I think, everybody understands us: The European Union, last week, issued a statement saying that the position of the government is quite understandable.

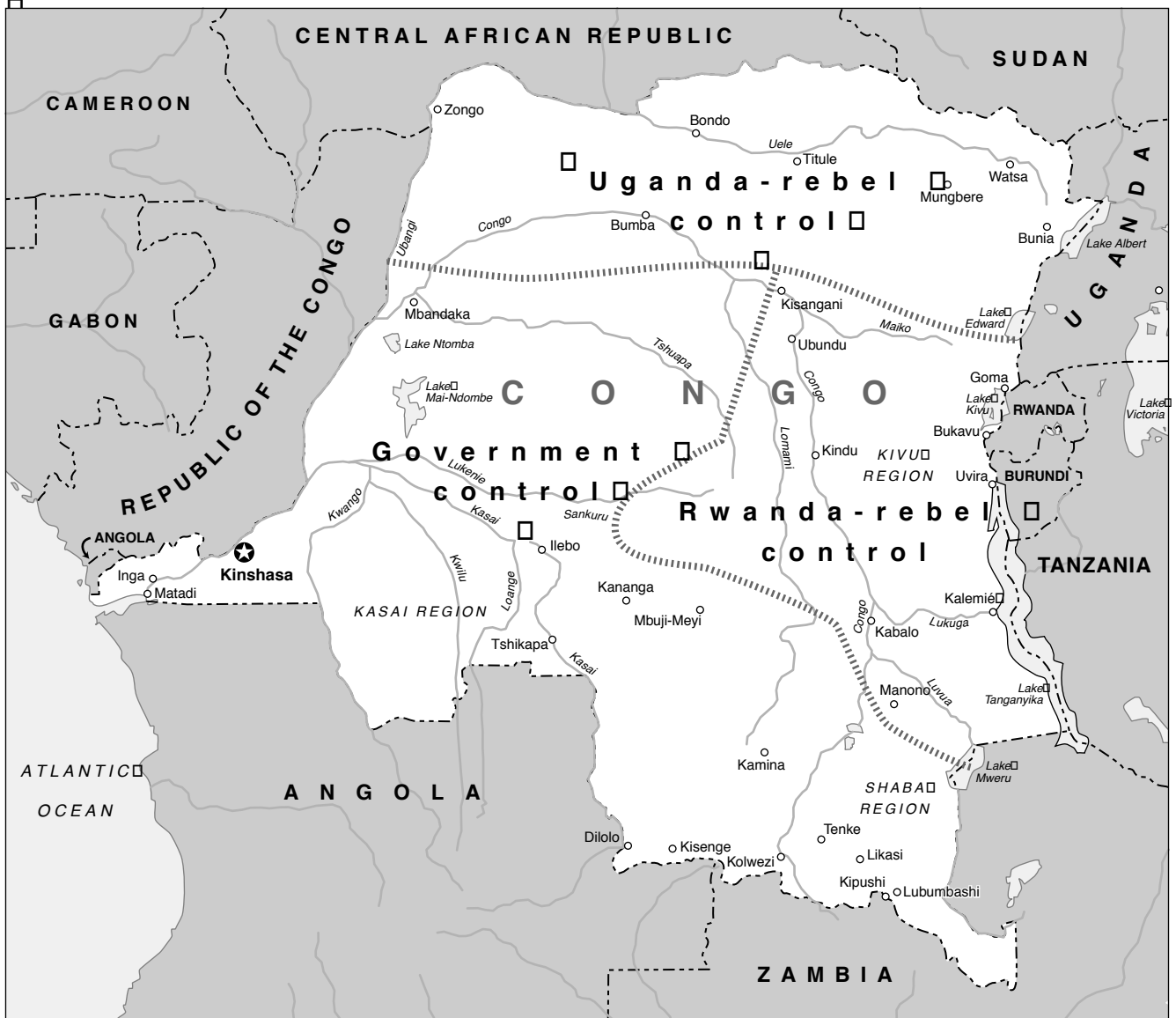
So, we gave the facilitator a chance, more time, to consult with the other interested parties, and, by the way, also to collect the necessary funds, because he did not have enough money. Because, we agreed to meet for 45 days, for the dialogue, but he did not have enough money to convene a dialogue for 45 days. So, he will have additional time to collect money, and also to consult with the other interested parties.

That's when South Africa came up with the idea that: "Look, we will be ready to pay for food and accommodation. We can provide the facilities in South Africa. Let all the participants come to South Africa, and we'll pay for everything." So, I think in a month's time, or so, we will be meeting in South Africa for dialogue per se.

EIR: The government is a sovereign government, with President Joseph Kabila as its chief officer. The Inter-Congolese Dialogue is to facilitate bringing other forces into the government? Or into a Congress? Or, how would it work, with the present government of President Kabila?

Bin Karubi: That's also a problem. I mean, we as the government—President Kabila's government—our understanding of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, is a forum, whereby we are going to discuss about the structures that will—to put together structures that would rule our country, for years to

FIGURE 10
Genocidal War Divided Congo



Years of invasions set loose the Four Horsemen upon the Democratic Republic of the Congo, killing millions by war and disease. As of May 2001, they left Congo partitioned, as this map shows.

come. The problem that we have today, is that of legitimacy. We don't have the Constitution, we don't have laws, we don't have rules, you see? Let's meet together, as Congolese, put together these structures, and then, go to the people and hold elections, so that the people can decide who's going to be *their* leaders for tomorrow.

EIR: And this would be for Parliament, not for the Presidency?

Bin Karubi: Well, we don't know. In the Congolese Dia-

logue, we'll decide, whether the Presidency is a vacant post. I don't think it is now, because there is a legitimate government, in the name of Maj. Gen. Joseph Kabila. But, of course, the Presidency will also be put to the test: We'll ask the people to elect a President, at some point.

EIR: Has all the fighting by the rebel groups and the insurgent groups come to an end in the Congo?

Bin Karubi: Yes. The cease-fire is holding, in the front lines. You know, along the front lines, we are not fighting. But, I

President Kabila is appealing . . . to the international community to put pressure on those people who are sponsoring this war. You and I know very well that Rwanda and Uganda do not have the means to stage a war. So, somebody's sponsoring them, somebody's helping them. And, it is high time that people stopped this barbarism.

understand that all rebel groups and occupation forces, in all localities that they are holding, they are having a hard time to control these places, because the population is resisting the occupation of the country.

EIR: That's what I was going to ask you about, because you have the main rebel groups that are controlled by Uganda and Rwanda, are still occupying a very large territory. Last time I was told, it was about 50% of the country. Are they still occupying the territory? Are they running the government in these areas? Are they expected to leave, at some early point?

Bin Karubi: Yes, they are occupying these territories. They are expected to leave. The Lusaka peace protocol says that, after the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, the next step would be, what we call, the DDRR, meaning: disengagement, disarmament, rehabilitation, and relocation, of forces, you see. So, we have to demobilize them, disarm them—all the rebel groups—and then relocate them, wherever they come from. So, at that point, foreign troops are supposed to withdraw from the Congo.

EIR: At this point, would you say that, in these areas controlled by the rebel groups, that there's a dual power, in the sense that they control this territory, even though the country is still sovereign to the Democratic Republic of Congo, with President Kabila in charge? Are there two governments, in these territories?

Bin Karubi: No, there are not two governments! There is one government, with one part of the country occupied by foreign forces.

EIR: Are these foreign forces carrying out the responsibilities of government for the people in those areas?

Bin Karubi: No! They are there; they are rebel forces. What they are doing is well known by the whole world: They are looting.

EIR: Yes. Well, that was the point, that there have been years of looting. Has that looting stopped at this point, and are these rebel forces simply holding territory, waiting for the outcome of the Congolese dialogue?

Bin Karubi: No, they're looting; they're wiping out all the resources of the Congo, selling it to whoever wants to buy

them. Those are just rebels—they are looters, that's what they are.

EIR: Specifically, in terms of the MCL [Congolese Liberation Movement] and the RCD-Goma [Congolese Rally for Democracy], are they continuing to carry out looting policies, in coordination with Uganda and Rwanda?

Bin Karubi: Yes, they are. And that's what we're telling the international community, to impose sanctions, or to put pressure on them, to stop that, which is really a shame in today's world, to see such things happen!

EIR: Those conditions existing, how is the economy of the Congo able to function?

Bin Karubi: Well, the economy is in shambles. I mean, we have no economy, now. We're doing our best in the parts that we control, to control inflation and to stabilize the macroeconomic sector—with some results, by the way. In the four months in power, we have been able to stabilize the exchange rate between the Congolese franc and the U.S. dollar. We've been able to stabilize the price of fuel, transport, and basic commodities. So, I think, we're doing well, as far as the economy is concerned. But, the same cannot be said, in the parts that are controlled by the rebels.

EIR: There was a report at the end of the war, that, at one point, 80% of the population was endangered, because of the medical conditions and lack of food. And, there was another report, that 16 million people were in danger, their existence was threatened. Have food and medical relief been given to the population, following the war; or has that not been possible, because of the lack of infrastructure?

Bin Karubi: Well, the infrastructure is there, but it's just obsolete, so to speak. And the hospitals are in very bad shape, but there are some organizations that are trying to do their best. I mean, we've got so many NGOs there, that try to help. There's also programs by the World Health Organization. But, all in all, the health situation is quite bad.

EIR: Would you be willing to give any kind of estimate of the number of people whose lives are threatened by the poor conditions that exist following the war?

Bin Karubi: Oh, if you want figures, the International Res-

cue Committee estimated that 3.5 million people have died, either directly or indirectly, as a result of this war. So, those who are burdened indirectly — that means that people go hungry, people get displaced, and people are not given an opportunity to carry on their lives normally, because of this war — so, if 3.5 million have died, that means that there could be the same number of people living in dire poverty.

EIR: So, at this point, there is a real danger that relief will not get to all the people who need it, because of these economic conditions.

Bin Karubi: Well, there are some organizations that are doing a good job. They are going all the way to the places where there are people who need help, and make sure that they get that help. But, those efforts, that are being done by those non-governmental organizations, we hope that more will be done.

EIR: What actions does President Kabila see, in the immediate future, as necessary to begin reviving the Congo?

Bin Karubi: First of all, President Kabila is appealing for peace. He's appealing to the international community to put pressure on those people who are sponsoring this war. I mean, you and I know very well that Rwanda and Uganda do not have the means to stage a war. So, somebody's sponsoring them, somebody's helping them. And, it is high time that people stopped this barbarism.

EIR: Have there been any reports of who is behind these groups?

Bin Karubi: It's hard to pinpoint anyone, but we know very well that the loot that they are taking from the eastern Congo is being sold by some companies and some multinationals, and these are the people who are fueling this war. And, we are appealing to Western governments to put sanctions on the loot that comes from the Congo: Stop buying it! Or, put pressure on these companies that are doing business with the rebellion. That's one way of stopping it from happening.

EIR: What information do you have that Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda would actually honor any agreement, and remove their occupation forces from the eastern and northern part of the Congo?

Bin Karubi: Well, they have promised. They have promised to do exactly that. But, I cannot speak for President Kagame or President Museveni. It's for themselves, themselves: They've got consciences, and it's for them to prove that they respect their word.

EIR: So, President Kabila is asking for peace?

Bin Karubi: He's asking for peace, and once we have attained peace, the Congolese people will have a chance to go on with their lives, and develop their country.

EIR: And what about the other countries that were brought in at the request of the government, to defend them against these invading forces? Are they leaving the Congo as well, or are they still remaining?

Bin Karubi: They are leaving. As a matter of fact, Namibia has pulled out completely; we don't have one single Namibian soldier on our soil. We've got some Angolans, and some Zimbabweans. And, they're there; they came at our invitation to help us defend our country.

The fact of the matter is, that we inherited a country that was completely destroyed by the former dictator Mobutu. He destroyed every single aspect of life in that country, and, as a result of that, we don't have an army. That is why we went into an alliance. We called our brothers from the SADC [Southern Africa Development Community] region to come and help us fight this war. And, that's why Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia are in the Congo.

But, as I said, Namibia has pulled out completely. Zimbabwe's still there. Angola's got some symbolic presence in the Congo. But they have all said, time and again, that they will pull out, when the time comes.

EIR: And, at this point, you don't expect that the rebel occupying forces will pull out, until after more action is taken with the disarmament policy and the intervention by the UN?

Bin Karubi: Once again, I can't speak for them. I mean, we hope that they will respect what they said. We signed an accord, we signed an agreement, the international community was there, and we hope that they will respect whatever they signed.

EIR: What kind of support are you getting from the government of President Bush in these efforts, and from other Western countries?

Bin Karubi: We've met with officials from the Bush Administration, and we've got support. They have told us, that they believe that the time has come to stabilize the Central African region, especially in light of what's happening now in the world. If that place, that jungle place of Central Africa stays in turmoil all the time, it will be fertile ground, even for the terrorism that we are fighting today.

EIR: That's certainly true. The conditions throughout all of Africa, right now, are very poor, to say the least.

Bin Karubi: That is correct, yes.

EIR: That's one of the reasons that Mr. LaRouche, the founder of this magazine, has called for massive infrastructure development for nations throughout Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa.

Thank you very much for this report. I know you have to travel back to your country tomorrow, and I appreciate that you took out some time to discuss this with us.

Bin Karubi: Thank you very much.