



**INTERNATIONAL
REFUGEE
RIGHTS
INITIATIVE**

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

A quarterly update from the International Refugee Rights Initiative
April - June 2016

We hope you enjoy this update on our activities between April and June 2016 and want to thank you for your continued interest and support of IRRI. We continue to expand our sphere of influence with our twitter following increasing by almost 15% in the last three months alone and if you are not following us yet, please do. Our twitter handle is [@IntRefRights](#). April also saw a record sign up for our mailing list, and our Facebook page received over 2300 “likes”. So, thank you all for continuing to help us spread our important messages, your ongoing support adds weight to and amplifies our own advocacy efforts.

This newsletter has updates on the following programme areas:

- Understanding and responding to mass violence
- Protection of refugees and internally displaced persons
- citizenship and nationality rights

and what's coming up in the next three months

Andie Lambe
Executive Director

Understanding and Responding to Mass Violence

This quarter saw the publication of the second in our three part series on civilian perspectives of peacekeeping, “[No One on Earth Cares if We Survive Except for God and Sometimes UNAMID: The challenges of peacekeeping in Darfur](#)”. This time, we highlighted the perspectives of those living in Sudan's Darfur region, who are currently “protected” by the joint UN-AU peacekeeping force UNAMID. We timed the release to coincide with the conversations in New York around the renewal of UNAMID's mandate. In the context of the Sudanese government's insistence on agreeing an exit strategy, we felt that it was vital that the voices of those seeking protection from UNAMID be heard. Our research showed that the need for an independent peacekeeping force is as great as ever.

We have engaged in significant advocacy efforts relating to our work this area including disseminating the publications on [UNAMID](#) and [UNMISS](#) at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, to policymakers in New York and London. We have also been working with civil society organisations to coordinate efforts on advocacy in advance of the September ministerial meeting on peacekeeping hosted by the UK. We also published a [blog](#) for International Peacekeeping Day and delivered an [oral statement](#) relating to

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Somalia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and met with the Somali mission in Geneva to discuss our upcoming research.

Our work on **Burundi** continues as we try and ensure the international community and the Burundi government work to resolve this ongoing and increasingly entrenched crisis. Following on from the publication of our [research paper](#), we've continued to work to keep the crisis in the public eye. We met with a number of UN missions in New York to share our findings, fed our perspectives into joint NGO positions on the proposed deployment of policing forces and shared our report with delegates at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. In addition, we worked with our colleagues at the Uganda chapter of the ICGLR civil society forum to present at a meeting on the crisis to ensure Ugandan civil society was better informed and able to keep engaged on the issue. We also signed an [open letter](#) to the AU's Peace and Security Council regarding their planned visit to Burundi, which they were proposing that Burundi would lead, calling the whole exercise into question. In the end, the mission went ahead, but under the leadership of the permanent representative of Congo.

Following on from our report on [UNMISS](#) in South Sudan, we have increased our engagement with policymakers in the UK and US and collaborated on a number of civil society initiatives including an [open letter](#) to Festus Mogae, the Chair of South Sudan's Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (JMEC), highlighting the importance of the proposed hybrid court and recognising that accountability is vital to ensure the longer term stability of South Sudan. We also published a [blog](#) trying to understand the "cross border" raid from South Sudan on the Gambella region of Ethiopia.

Following on from our experts meeting in Nairobi on the AU's draft Transitional Justice Framework, we attended a conference co-hosted by [ICTJ](#) and the [Austrian Development Corporation](#) on "[Transitional Justice in the Great Lakes Region](#)". Also in a [blog](#), we highlighted Uganda's conflicting and inconsistent relationship with the ICC. Whilst the government of Uganda is proactively working with the ICC on the case of Dominic Ongwen, the president is consistently vocal about his opposition to the institution and took the opportunity of his inauguration to highlight that position.

The [ICGLR](#) is an important regional body and IRRI is proud to be part of the Steering Committee on the Uganda civil society forum for the ICGLR. In this capacity we work with other members of the steering committee on issues relevant to Uganda and the ICGLR. In this quarter, we attended the [launch](#) of a CSO handbook and undertook media interviews with local Ugandan media and participated in the [ICGLR National Civil Society Forum Advocacy Workshop](#), to strengthen the capacity of civil society ICGLR national forum members to monitor and hold governments accountable for the implementation of the Kampala Declaration on SGBV. We also worked with some Sudan focused partners and wrote an [open letter](#) to the member states of the ICGLR urging them to take action to address the ongoing security and humanitarian crisis in Sudan and establish a joint commission of inquiry to investigate the situation.



We continued our work on the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, and published a [blog](#) to try to bring further attention to the increasingly dire situation in the eastern DRC province of North Kivu. In addition to tension in eastern DRC, political tensions are increasing, with disagreements over the electoral schedule providing a flashpoint.

Elections were scheduled for the end of the year, but the government is insisting they be postponed and the opposition are demanding they are held as scheduled and the situation on the ground is increasingly tense. At this delicate time we will continue to monitor the situation in the DRC and work with our civil society partners, on the ground and internationally to try and ensure that human rights violations are minimised.



We also wrote a [blog](#) on the DRC's neighbour, the **Republic of Congo**, which held elections in March that saw the incumbent, Dennis Sassou-Nguesso, retain power despite controversy around the electoral process and human rights violations that took place in the run-up to, and aftermath of, the elections.



Our work on **Sudan** increased with the recruitment of an advocacy officer, Kafia Omar, whose work has increased our impact. We have been able to initiate a number of advocacy efforts, for example on International Day against Sexual Violence in Conflict (June 19), we led the drafting of a civil society [statement](#) on the situation in Sudan with regards to the situation of SVC focusing on SK and BN that was signed onto by 24 CSOs. On International Refugee Day (June 20) we also led the drafting of a civil society [statement](#), signed by 12 CSOs criticising the EU's engagement with Sudan to address refugee flows through the Khartoum Process, especially in light of Sudan's status as the fifth largest generator of refugees in the world. And we also led the drafting of a [letter](#) addressed to the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan - ahead of his visit to Sudan - with 10 other signatories.

We published a [blog](#) on the referendum in Darfur, which was presented by the government as completion of its commitments to the Doha, despite the vote being marred by severe insecurity and ongoing displacement.

The Advocacy Officer's presence has also enabled us to engage more in direct advocacy. For example we attended the 32nd UN Human Rights Council session in Geneva and met with UK, US, EU delegates and OHCHR to discuss the situation in Sudan both in the conflict areas and as regards the general human rights situation and concerns relating to the Khartoum Process and the [Roadmap Agreement](#) for Sudan (Roadmap). We also engaged in a "10 days of online activism" campaign with [ACJPS](#) and [FIDH](#) on Sudan's UPR. The campaign ran for 10 days up to the day of the UPR highlighting different human rights issues and recommendations each day, and was supported by a summary [document](#) of our submission to Sudan's UPR. Many of the issues that we raised were included in the UN's [own summary document](#) produced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (search for JS6).

We have also continued with the important work of supporting the National Human Rights Monitoring Organisation, which continues to record incidents of human rights abuses committed against the civilian population of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states and publish monthly updates. This quarter has seen over 100 incidents resulting in the death and injury of almost 100 civilians and the five year anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict in Southern Kordofan. To bring attention to this sad anniversary, we produced a [photo gallery](#) and engaged in a twitter campaign to support the awareness-raising activities. Along with the March human rights [report](#). We also produced a 2015 [annual review](#) on the conflict.

We have also continued to collaborate with partner organisations, for example by attending a meeting in Nairobi on the Sudan Framework – a coalition of local, regional and national NGOs working on Sudan – and another meeting coordinated by the Sudan Framework to discuss the Darfur referendum, civil society positions on the Roadmap, and the Khartoum Process. We also signed onto a [letter](#) addressed to the UK government regarding the conflict in Sudan, coordinated by [Waging Peace](#), a letter [drafted](#) by [ACJPS](#) relating to student demonstrations in Sudan and the excessive use of force by security services and along with 74 other organisations, signed onto a [letter](#) to the AU and UN questioning the signing of the Roadmap by only the government and the mediators.

Protection of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons

Work protecting the rights of refugees and IDPs continued in a context in which discussions around forced migration have received greater attention with the so-called "migration crisis" in Europe. We attended UNHCR's annual NGO consultations, where we were able, amongst other things, to highlight our Post Deportation Monitoring (PDM) programme. The PDM coordinator presented at a session entitled "*Where we live: safe asylum space for youth*" and at another session entitled "*The Principle of Non-Refoulement under International Human Rights Law*", and hosted a side event entitled "*Deportation as Refoulement*". The work was well received and has helped us to raise the issue of post deportation risks and was also a great opportunity to identify new partners to add to our growing network. In the same vein, our [report](#) on the alleged "voluntary" deportation of African

asylum seekers from Israel to unknown third countries, has continued to have an impact. The US State Department Annual Human Rights report 2015 was [published](#) and we were very pleased to see the report get a mention in the Uganda country section.

We have continued to engage with debates on displaced rights including our [blog](#) drawing on Kenya's decision to close the Dabaab refugee camp. We also presented on a panel at the launch of the [Refugee Law Project's](#) film "*Life is a Dance*", a product of the "*Mobility in the African Great Lakes Project*" that IRRI was involved with between 2012-2014 and attended a [workshop](#) organised by the Refugee Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) to evaluate and discuss the findings of a review entitled "*Durable Solutions Framework – Refugee Focus in Uganda.*"

Our West Africa work continued with a number of media interviews on the situation of refugee and asylum seekers in Senegal and the Senegalese asylum process including [Les réfugiés toujours en quête de protection effective au Sénégal, Journée mondiale des réfugiés : 14274 réfugiés et 2 914 demandeurs d'asile, enregistrés au Sénégal, Ces Failles de la "Teranga" Senegalaise](#) and [Celebration de la journée mondiale: Les réfugiés et demandeurs d'asile ne goutant pas a la Teranga Senegalaise](#) and with Afia FM and Zik FM on and around International Refugee Day.

Our Rights in Exile programme published the [April](#), [May](#) and [June](#) issues of its newsletter, including a number of original pieces written specifically for the newsletter. The website continued to expand its resources in our efforts to provide refugees and their advocates with access to reliable and necessary support and information.

Citizenship and nationality rights



We continued maintaining the [Citizenship Rights in Africa website](#), sending out a regular newsletter and editing the [blog](#). We also co-organised and participated in a training session for members of the network on advocacy strategies. We were also able to recruit a number of new members to the network. In addition, both IRRI and our partners at [Lawyers for Human Rights](#) in South Africa were able to forward the concerns of the network about statelessness at the UNHCR Global Consultations in Geneva.

To Look forward to

Coming up in the next three months:

- To coincide with the five year anniversary of the start of the conflict, we will publish a report on the conflict dynamics in Sudan's Blue Nile state.
- We will be attending the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva where the NHRMO Executive Director will be taking part in a side event.
- We will continue to facilitate the publication of the data gathered by the NHRMO monitors in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and will draw together a some thematic reports in addition to the regular monthly reporting.
- We are also planning on publishing a report based on research undertaken recently in Burundi, where the crisis is still ongoing and increasingly entrenched.
- We will– after our usual August break – continue to publish the Rights in Exile newsletter.
- We will be engaging with the UN High-Level Summit on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants that is being held in September in New York and are organising an experts meeting to discuss some of the key issues resulting from that event.
- Last, but not least, we will continue our advocacy efforts relating to all of our interest areas and countries.

As subscribers to our mailing list, you already know how vitally important our work is and we really value your ongoing support. One of the key ways you can show your support is by helping us increase our reach, so please feel free to send this newsletter onto anyone you think might be interested in our work. However if you would like to consider making a [donation](#) we would of course be grateful.