



**INTERNATIONAL
REFUGEE
RIGHTS
INITIATIVE**

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

A quarterly update from the International Refugee Rights Initiative
July-December 2016

Welcome to the fourth "quarterly" newsletter that the eagle-eyed among you will notice in fact covers six months of our activities, so our apologies for it being a little longer than usual.

Over the coming months, we will be undertaking some exciting new research on migration issues in the Horn of Africa and looking at the impact of the securitisation of refugee policies on the lives of Somali refugees. We will also be publishing the third report on civilian perspectives on peacekeeping, focusing on AMISOM in Somalia. We will be doubling our efforts to keep advocating for the rights of refugees to be respected.

In this update you can find information on the following:

- [Rights in Exile](#)
- [Causes and resolution of displacement](#) including our work on
 - Gambia
 - Burundi
 - Sudan
 - South Sudan
 - DRC
- [Citizenship Rights](#)

Despite the commitments made during the September UN meeting on migration and the World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey, the last six months of 2016 saw the continuation of negative rhetoric in Europe with regards to respecting refugees' rights – and then, of course, the year ended with the election of Donald Trump in the US. All of this means that our work is more important than ever and we continue to appreciate your support.

Andie Lambe
Executive Director

Rights in Exile

Uganda is still the "place to be a refugee" if all the external discourse is to be believed. This has been of concern to IRRI, as we believe there is a risk of creating a myth of the "perfect" refugee hosting situation that may gloss over the real obstacles and challenges that host and refugee communities in Uganda are dealing with on a daily basis. Being top of the class does not automatically make you an "A" grade, if the rest of the class is failing... And while IRRI recognises the generosity of Uganda in terms of taking in refugees, the rapid influx of refugees fleeing the conflict in South Sudan in the last six months has pushed Uganda's capacity to

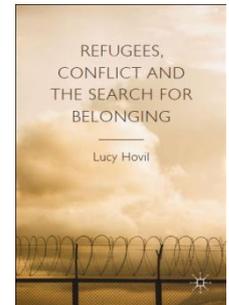
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the limit. With this in mind, IRRI has worked hard to speak with the innumerable researchers and journalists who have, over the past six months, come to study this refugee “success story” and we are pleased to see a more nuanced and accurate approach being taken. (See, for example, the UK’s [Guardian newspaper](#) and [Thomson Reuters](#).)

IRRI has been working on these issues for many years and some of this work has been brought together in a new book entitled, *Refugees, Conflict and the Search for Belonging* published by Palgrave and available for purchase [here](#). We [launched](#) the book at an event at Chatham House, London and also [held an event](#) at the Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University. Also, with the generous support of the [Harry F. Guggenheim Foundation](#), we hosted an “experts” meeting entitled “*After the UN Summit Addressing Large movements of Refugees and Migrants: What next?*” to identify the possible next steps and solutions for the future.



We continued to engage with policy makers – for example, meeting UNHCR on the Senegalese asylum process and the living conditions of asylum seekers; meeting with EU representatives in Uganda; and meeting with UK government officials including with Baroness Sheehan, Shadow Minister for International Development. We continued to raise the profile of issues of concern to us, including a [blog](#) on the situation of Somali refugees in Kenya’s Dadaab camp, the issue of their “voluntary” returns after visiting the camp, and spoke with over 30 refugees and civil society organisations (CSOs) operating there.

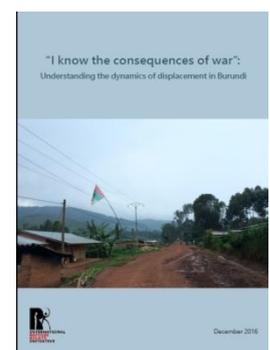
We also contributed to the wider work undertaken by some of our civil society colleagues, including attending an “experts” meeting on what can be done to [promote, support and facilitate the solution process in the early stages of displacement](#). We took part in a two day workshop, “*Access to justice for migrants: The situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Senegal*”, presented at an event hosted by DefendDefenders, where challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) as refugees were scrutinised, and attended an “experts” meeting, hosted by [KAS Uganda](#), on harmonising the refugee policy in the EAC. We also contributed information about Uganda that resulted in the publication, [Forced Migration in the OIC Member Countries: Policy Framework Adopted by Host Countries](#), and we presented on the nexus between statelessness and refugees at the [launch of a toolkit](#) on preventing statelessness for Syrian refugees at the London School of Economics in the UK.

The huge increase in the numbers of people on the move has meant that our Rights in Exile monthly newsletter – aimed at achieving better protection of refugee rights by networking legal assistance providers with resources and training and facilitating access to free legal assistance and information for refugees around the world – has become increasingly important. Here are the [July September October November and December editions](#) of the RiE newsletter. If you do not currently receive this newsletter you can subscribe [here](#).

Causes and resolution of displacement

Under this stream of work, we continued to highlight situations in the Great Lakes region that we identified as having the capacity to deteriorate resulting in new or increased numbers of displaced persons.

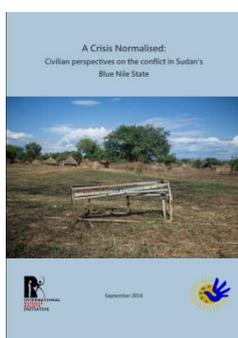
Since 2012, IRRI has been one of the few NGOs that has been [consistently highlighting](#) the deteriorating human rights situation in **Gambia** – which held elections at the end of 2016. Anyone who has followed events in the Gambia would have been unsurprised by the election results that saw the incumbent Yahya Jammeh lose to his opponent, Adama Barrow. More surprising was Jammeh’s apparent concession, only for his U-turn a few weeks later. ECOWAS’ determination to see democracy take its course, no doubt helped to avoid what could have become a protracted crisis – much like the one that is [ongoing](#) in **Burundi**. In December, we launched our latest report, [I Know the Consequences of War: Understanding the dynamics of displacement in Burundi](#) looking at why the number of those displaced by the crisis was so rapid and significant. We also



attended UK parliament's International Development Committee's inquiry on Burundi and had a piece published in Refugees Deeply: [Burundi's Refugee Crisis Propelled by Injustice and Broken Promises](#).

We also worked with partners to help establish a coalition of regional, national and international actors to try and raise awareness around the worsening situation in the **DRC** – which is itself embroiled in a political crisis, relating to the expiry of the Presidential term and the need to hold elections. We pushed for sanctions to be placed on those individuals deemed to be undermining the democratic process. In September the [US imposed sanctions](#) on two individuals and then in December the [EU](#) followed suit placing sanctions on seven individuals.

Our work on **Sudan** also continued. We increased our collaboration with UK based and regional CSOs to increase the impact of our joint advocacy, wrote a [blog](#) on Bashir and the International Criminal Court (ICC) for International Justice Day (17 July), wrote a [paper](#) on the deterrent effect of the ICC in Sudan, "The Limits of a Lonely Court," published in book by the International Nuremburg Principles Academy, *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: The Deterrent Effect of International Criminal Tribunals*, and published a related [blog](#).



The conflicts in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states continued, although the rate of human rights abuses committed against the civilian population were reduced due to a ceasefire imposed in June at the start of the rainy season. Thankfully, it continues to hold. We published the [April, May, and June human rights monitoring reports](#). We also published a five year "anniversary" [overview](#) of the conflict in Southern Kordofan summarising the violations against civilians over that period, prepared a [briefing](#) on the impact of the conflict in Southern Kordofan on children, and published our report [A Crisis Normalised](#) on the conflict dynamics in Blue Nile state on the five year anniversary of the start of the conflict.

Our advocacy in the UK included a [submission](#) to the UK Parliament's All Party Parliamentary Group on Sudan's inquiry on the conflict situation in Sudan, meeting with the new UK Special Advisor on Sudan and South Sudan, and ensuring the conflict in the Two Areas has been increasingly raised in the UK House of Commons and House of Lords - including seven spoken references and eight written answers.

We also wrote an [open letter](#) regarding the human rights situation in Sudan in advance of the 33rd session of the UNHRC in Geneva, which we attended in person, meeting with delegations including the US, UK, EU, Canada, Switzerland, Germany as well as a number of others. During the session, we organised and chaired a well-attended side event focusing on Sudan's conflict areas, and met with the UN's Independent Expert on Sudan. We also continued to demand Sudan's greater respect for human rights, by calling for attention to the detention of civil society activists from [TRACKs](#) and [Dr Mudawi](#).

South Sudan - following on from our work on UNMISS, we have increased our advocacy on South Sudan more generally, which included [pushing](#) for the creation of the Hybrid Court. engaging in joint civil society advocacy around the expansion of UNMISS in response to the July 2016 violence, actively participating in the #HaltArms campaign, pushing for an arms embargo and for the deployment of the proposed Regional Protection Force (RPF) and signing an [open letter](#) to the UN Human Rights Council, on the anniversary of the start of the conflict, urging it to use its full powers to help end the appalling atrocities committed against civilians. We also met with the new UK Special Envoy on South Sudan and published [a blog](#) trying to understand the "cross border" raid from South Sudan on the Gambella region of Ethiopia.



Peacekeeping

We met with UK government's Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) representatives on peacekeeping to disseminate the findings from our reports on UNMISS and UNAMID, and attended a meeting co-hosted by UK government's FCO and Ministry of Defence in advance of the UK-led Ministerial on peacekeeping held in September, to ensure our report findings were included. We were pleased to note that the [Ministerial Communiqué](#) reflected a number of our recommendations. We met with UN missions on UNMISS in response to July crisis and held discussions around UNMISS expansion (with the Rwandan and New Zealand missions and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)). We also contributed to two civil society papers to the UN re the response by UNMISS to the July crisis and a private note to Security Council members. Many of our recommendations, including the need to ensure that the new expansion force was fully integrated into the current UNMISS command structure, were subsequently taken up in the resolution. However, other points, such as how to ensure deployment of high quality troops, remain unaddressed. We also attended a meeting on protection of civilians and commented on a draft ICRC manual on the topic.

Other

We continued as Steering Committee members of Uganda's civil society forum of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and as members of the Uganda National Committee for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCP-GMA) and of the International Coalition on the Responsibility to Protect, increasing our advocacy reach and bringing new voices to the fore. We have also continued working with the ICC Victims' Rights Working Group that produced a paper for the ASP and wrote an [open letter](#) to the Presidents of African State Parties to the ICC – commending these governments for their ongoing support of the ICC in the face of the threatened withdrawals

Citizenship Rights

As part of the Citizenship in Africa Initiative (CRAI) we have maintained the new website, sending regular updates to the subscriber. We also published a [statement](#) on the passing of Adam Hussein Adam, a courageous advocate against statelessness and a long-time partner of the CRAI network and contributed a chapter in the book, [Solving Statelessness](#): *“Ensuring that today's refugees are not tomorrow's stateless persons: Solutions in a refugee context.”*

