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Irish anarchist on the 'Uganda Anarchist Democratic Forces (UADF)'

Chekov Feeney

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<http://struggle.ws/africa/uganda/irishsep2000.html>

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Hi Comrades,

Sorry for taking so long to reply about the Ugandan anarchists, I have been out of email contact (in Western Uganda).] However, I did try to find out whatever information I could about the rebel groups in Uganda.

For starters, there does appear to be a rebel group called the ADF active in Western Uganda. Again, as reported, they do appear to be based in the Ruwenzori mountains (aka mountains of the moon). The report also seems accurate in quoting Kiboga as a target of ADF attacks, the government owned New Vision paper of 28/8 carried an article entitled "Kiboga district registers visitors to stall ADF threat" which quotes col. Wasser, first divisional commander of UPDF (Ugandan army) as saying: "some of the captured ADF rebels have confessed that the group now operating in Kibaale, Mubende and Hoima districts had been dispatched to establish a camp in Kiboga district. Also, from my brief visit there, it would seem that the ADF are cur-

rently by far the most active rebel group in the country, the papers regularly include stories of their attacks.

However, aside from this, the report seems quite different to the information I received in Uganda.

Firstly, and crucially, the ADF is universally held to stand for "Allied Democratic Forces", not "Anarchist Democratic Forces". When the ADF spokesperson says: "Reactionary forces have used an allied democratic forces (adf) to contra UADF from the masses" does he mean that there are two groups both called ADF?

Secondly, according to the person I asked (whose reliability I can't vouch for), the ADF was formed after a split in a muslim seperatist group in North Uganda, one faction became the ADF, the other became the West Nile Front, another rebel group active in North West Uganda. This same source claimed that nobody knew what the ADF were fighting for, but that they were supported by the Sudan government. This is plausible since Sudan and Uganda have long been fighting a proxy war, sponsoring rebels in each others territory. The LRA, lord's resistance army (christian fundamentalist), another Ugandan rebel group, are certainly based in Sudan.¹

Thirdly there is the question of methods. Even if the ADF say they are anarchists, their practice is fairly important. The Ugandan media (both government owned and independant), reported that the ADF abducted 25 people from Nyakeseke vilage, near Hoima, on August 11th. According to the reports of an escapee, 10 of the captives were beheaded, and indeed 3 of the bodies were recovered on August 20th in Kyangwali forest, without heads. It is possible that this story was concocted to disparage the rebels, although this seems unlikely since the two

¹ Also another useful Ugandan source is the regime's New Vision newspaper at www.newvision.co.ug they carried a picture of the destroyed army barracks in Kibaale in their yesterday issue (the attack reported by the ADF spokesperson). This paper obviously follows the government line but its not as slavishly pro- regime as some African papers.

journalists who first reported the story were promptly arrested for publishing lies - Uganda does not like to publicise terrorist atrocities especially after the Interahamwe killed 8 tourists in Bwindi forest last year and decimated the tourist industry. Also, I think it is worth mentioning that when we travelled to Fort Portal at the foothills of the Ruwenzori mountains, where the ADF are based, we found that youth in the area were afraid to travel the roads after dark, for fear of being abducted and pressed into the ADF. However, if there really are two ADF's then these atrocities could be carried out by the 'bad' ADF. The 3 headless bodies recovered in Kyangwali forest were found about 1 kilometre from a UPDF army base.

Now, based on all this, I certainly suspect that the ADF story may be a hoax, although if it is, it is a very strange one. The writer certainly seems to know Uganda and the various issues that are important there at the moment. For example when he says: "Uganda has exported it's social problems to both Rwanda and Congo(DRC)", this very phrase was used by a professor at Kampala university about 10 days ago, in a speech widely reported in Uganda.²

However, I am by no means certain that it is fake. I am mainly relying on the Ugandan press and a few casual conversations for my information and, as I say, I had no particular interest in the ADF, I'd never heard of them before and it was purely by chance that I saw their name in the paper and tried to find out who they were. Therefore I think that it is a good idea to tread carefully. However I think that it is certainly a good idea to ask them to explain themselves further. For starters they should clarify the Allied/Anarchist ADF issue, then they should have something to say about incidents like Kyangwali forest where many civilians are butchered.

² I just had another look at the ADF response on ainfos and I am very sure that the writer is from Uganda, there are very many details of his reply to Chuck that are probably meaningless to most people but refer to current issues in the Ugandan media/politics