

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

July 26, 2010

Dear Secretary Clinton,

As Africa-focused advocacy organizations committed to promoting peace and justice, we write to express our dismay, condemnation, and outrage over the recent attacks on civilians in Kampala, Uganda. Like you, we mourn the loss of innocent human lives and yearn for safety and security for all peoples across the continent. Furthermore, we share your fear that these attacks represent the regionalization of Somalia's decades-long internal conflict.

However, as the United States government determines how to support the Government of Uganda in the immediate investigation of the attacks as well as in pursuit of long-term peace and development, we strongly discourage an increasing U.S. security and counter-terrorism assistance to Uganda. The United States already funds some of the Ugandan government's counter-terrorism efforts, such as its Joint Anti-Terrorism Task Force, that are not subject to rigorous oversight or accountability. Increasing this assistance continues a policy that militarizes the Government of Uganda at the expense of transparency and good governance. The passage of the Interception of Communications bill is a worrying sign that President Museveni and the Government of Uganda will further backslide on civil liberties and human rights obligations while using the bombings and the fight against terrorism as a shield from scrutiny.

The response to these attacks ought to be thorough investigations that result in lawful arrests and criminal proceedings, followed by a re-invigorated commitment to addressing the root causes of instability in the region rather than military operations. Years of U.S. military action against terrorism has proved incapable of actually stemming extremist groups in either the Middle East or the Horn of Africa. Our military involvement in Somalia, which has been linked to the recruitment of child soldiers and the transfer of arms to al-Shabab, has proved only to further fuel the conflict. Instead of sending increased military support through AFRICOM, the United States should work to address the roots of the problem in Somalia – poverty and marginalization. Those who lack access to sufficient food, health care, or education are likely to join any group that promises a better alternative.

In the short term, we recommend that the United States:

- Pressure the Government of Uganda to thoroughly investigate human rights abuses by counter-terrorism units and hold perpetrators accountable via credible trials.
- Ensure that all military, police, security, and anti-terrorism assistance to Uganda protects, observes, and upholds human rights standards. Require that human rights training and monitoring be a central component of any assistance to Ugandan military, police, or security forces.
- Urge the Government of Uganda to protect its Muslim citizens against potential backlash attacks.

In the long term, the U.S. should reevaluate its approach in Somalia, where civilians continue to face high levels of insecurity despite diplomatic and military investment in the country. Furthermore, the U.S. must decrease military assistance to Uganda and Somalia and instead work to bolster civil society through support for sectors like education and health care. It is only when these fundamental needs are met that democratic institutions can emerge and true security can be achieved for both countries. Indeed, it is our fervent hope that the United States' involvement in the region will foster peace and economic well-being rather than incite further unrest and violence.

Sincerely,

Africa Faith & Justice Network
Africa Action
Africa Security Research Project
Association of Concerned Africa Scholars
Foreign Policy in Focus
Friends of the Congo
Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Pax Christi USA
TransAfrica Forum
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
U.S. Peace Council

CC: Johnny Carson, Assistant Secretary for Africa Affairs
Jerry Lanier, U.S. Ambassador to Uganda