

Traces of anarchism In Zambia & Uganda

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Historically, it's been hard to find any information of anarchism in central Africa, there was the short lived *Anarchist & Workers' Solidarity Movement (AWSM)* in Zambia led by Willstar Choongo, Zambia in the mid nineties had a very small "left" and Willstar came up through organising his fellow workers at the University of Zambia (UNZA), his group would later be kicked out of the University for advocating decentralisation and organising meetings outside of political parties¹. They planned to federate with the WSM (South Africa) who would later become the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation however his early death led to the collapse of the organisation.²

In the early 2000s there was a infamous debate on various anarchist blogs regarding emails from one Sub-delegate Joram claiming a attack on a police station to a group called the Uganda Anarchist Democratic Forces (UADF) one of the emails read;

"Anarchist rebels with balaclavas attacked a military police station and burnt it to the ground. Anarchist Democratic Forces (ADF) of uganda have been fighting Yoweri Museveni's military junta from the mountains of the moon in western uganda for 3 years now.

OVER 30 suspected Anarchist Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels attacked Nkooko Police Post in Kibaale killing two policemen and abducting another over the weekend. They also grabbed 20 guns and police uniform. The heavily armed attackers traveling aboard a Tata lorry also set fire to the police post and burnt documents at Nkooko sub-county headquarters. Army spokesman Major Phinehas Katirima told The New Vision(regimes official paper) that the incident took place Saturday morning."³

However, Chekov Feeny, an Irish anarchist who travelled Uganda at the time, wrote;

"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

¹ [<https://www.ainfos.ca/02/mar/ainfos00088.html>]

² [<https://drinkingwithghosts.blogspot.com/2015/>]

³ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/sub-delegate-joram-emails-from-the-uganda-anarchist-democratic-forces-uadf>

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

[...]

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?

[...]

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 independent), reported that the ADF abducted 25 people from Nyakeseke village, 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 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.”⁴

The emails linked back to a website, www.ugandans.com which unfortunately hasn’t been archived. Since the early 2000s, a blog has been active since the early 2000s with articles by one Joram Jojo, with a mix of local news, history and an interesting series of anti-copyright events at a university.⁵ They’re still active today, posting about current events in Uganda and occasionally about anarchist politics.⁶

⁴ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/chekov-feeney-irish-anarchist-on-the-uganda-anarchist-democratic-forces-uadf>

⁵ https://web.archive.org/web/20050214115112/http://uganda.blogspirit.com/anti-copyright_cinema/

⁶ <https://web.archive.org/web/20220816134017/http://uganda.blogspirit.com/>

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<https://muntjacmag.noblogs.org/post/2024/11/19/mutt-traces-of-anarchism-in-zambia-uganda>

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