

Reflections of the Martin Luther King Group, Goma (DRC)

1. Introduction

We have carried out this activity in a particular context insofar as it concerns the war of an armed group supported by Rwanda and Uganda, neighbouring countries of our country, the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although this is an unfortunate event, it has given us an idea of the wounds of the population of our country in general, and in particular in the eastern part. During this session, we discussed collective wounds.

2. Activities carried out

Two main activities were carried out, namely awareness raising on active non-violence and reflections on the questionnaire. This activity took place at the Université Catholique la Sapiencia in Goma, at the invitation of the university's Peace Club.

During this activity we exchanged views on violence and its consequences in our Great Lakes region. In fact, we were able to link the violence experienced and the old wounds and those that are still open to this day.

With regard to the questionnaire, we addressed the question of the old wounds suffered by our country. Since our country gained independence, tragic events have continued to plague the Democratic Republic of Congo. Already from 1960 to 1964, rebellions of all kinds tore the DRC apart, including the Mulleliste rebellion (led by Pierre Mullele), and that of Jean Schramme. It is worth mentioning here that, during these events, several thousands of Congolese citizens were killed. According to the people with whom we have discussed this, since 1996, with the so-called war of 'liberation', serious human rights violations have been committed, including secret acts of 'genocide', which have been raging for more than five years in the province of North Kivu and more particularly in the territories of Beni and Lubero in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other massacres include

- the Makobola massacre (South Kivu province) (among the victims, 16 women were buried alive);
- the Kiringa massacre (Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province);
- the Kasika massacre (South Kivu province);
- the Kisangani massacre (Tshopo province during the clashes between the Rwandan and Ugandan armies on Congolese soil...)

These events were caused by the frantic search for the natural and mineral resources of the Democratic Republic of Congo by neighbouring countries, often through the intermediary of large multinationals and Western powers.

As for social attitudes, there is a feeling of hatred, mistrust, violence and animosity towards members of the communities from which the alleged violators of the rights of the Congolese people come. As regards collective wounds that affect us, it is often wars that spare no one. On the other hand, they enrich the invaders and plunderers to the detriment of the Congolese people. The latter are becoming increasingly impoverished. In this connection, we can state, without fear of being contradicted, that virtually the entire Congolese population has become very poor while a tiny proportion of the population is enjoying

unprecedented wealth. One feels powerless in the face of this contrast, whereby the people of Congo are living in indescribable misery in a geological scandal.

As regards areas of "silence", several reports can be cited, including the United Nations Mapping Report on the massacres in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This report gives a detailed account of more than 500 perpetrators of serious crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. How can we talk about this report when many of the perpetrators are among those who govern the Democratic Republic of Congo and neighbouring countries?

Steps are being taken here and there to heal memories, but because some wounds are still bleeding, the process continues.

Our dream for our country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, is to live in a peaceful country where all communities live together and stand together for the sustainable and harmonious development of this beautiful and great country. To live in a country where the resources benefit its sons and daughters and not only foreigners and big powers. This dream will become a reality when we all understand that this country belongs to us and that we must use non-violent means to resolve our differences.

3. Lessons learned

In identifying all the collective wounds suffered by the Congolese people, we have learned the following:

- A significant increase in the number of people suffering from mental illnesses;
- Cardiovascular diseases;
- No one is spared from the Congolese drama.

4. Difficulties encountered

- Some people wanted to express their anger during the discussions. Fortunately we managed to calm them down.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

Generally speaking, the session went well, even if some questions reminded people of their own wounds. From the above, here are some recommendations from the people we talked to:

- Special attention should be paid to traumatised people, especially as they are becoming more and more numerous;
- The Healing of Memories approach is a very appropriate method in the context of the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo and is genuinely needed by its people;
- A support centre for traumatised people should be opened very soon in the town of Goma;
- Workshops on the theme of healing memories should be organised for a large number of beneficiaries;
- Particular attention should be paid to young people, especially as they were born and have grown up in a context of violence of all kinds.

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