



**It Was Only  
the Gun  
Speaking,  
With a Pool of  
Blood Flowing**  
The Ombaci Massacre:  
June 24, 1981

Maps showing Ombaci Mission and St. Josephs College, Arua



Figure 1: St. Joseph's College and Ombaci Catholic Mission.



Figure 2: St. Joseph's College



Figure 3: Ombaci Mission

## **About the Justice and Reconciliation Project**

The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) was established in 2005 in Gulu, Uganda to understand and explain the interests, needs, concerns and views of communities affected by conflict and to promote sustainable peace through the active involvement of war-affected communities in research and advocacy.

Find out more about JRP at <http://www.justiceandreconciliation.com> or email [info@justiceandreconciliation.com](mailto:info@justiceandreconciliation.com)

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Designed by Oryem Nyeko.

Cover photograph: The mass grave located at the Ombaci Mission.

Back photographs: Survivors of the Ombaci massacre pose after the Ombaci Massacre Memorial Prayer, 24 June 2013.

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# ACRONYMS

GoU	Government of Uganda
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
JRP	Justice and Reconciliation Project
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NRA/M	National Resistance Army/Movement
TPDF	Tanzania People's Defence Force
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UNRF	Uganda National Rescue Front
WNBF	West Nile Bank Front

# INTRODUCTION

The West Nile region of north western Uganda has suffered a number of wars in past decades that have left a lasting impact on the survivors. On Wednesday, June 24, 1981, in the midst of the war between the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) (hereafter 'the soldiers') and the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) (hereafter 'the rebels'), the Ombaci massacre took place, claiming the lives of close to 100 people and leaving countless wounded. This is a well-known massacre that, despite its infamy, has not been seriously investigated in the decades since. The Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) decided to document the Ombaci massacre while it is still possible to trace many of the survivors because the massacre is often mentioned in discussions of the conflict in northern Uganda.



Ombaci Catholic Church, where some of the survivors of the Ombaci Massacre stayed.

Ombaci is located just 4 kilometres north-west of Arua town on the Kaya Highway/Rhino Camp Road. The Ombaci Catholic Mission was established in 1920 and St. Joseph's College Ombaci, the secondary school, first opened in 1950 and became a government Secondary School in the 1970s. In a series of visits, beginning in February 2012, JRP met with numerous survivors and community members to ascertain the facts of the massacre and document the effect that it has had on this community. Estimates claim that around 10,000 people were seeking refuge at the mission and college when the massacre took place. The Red Cross had set up their only field clinic in West Nile at Ombaci, a factor which contributed to the number of people seeking shelter there. The attack on Ombaci also formed part of a wider pattern of abuses that were perpetrated against Catholic missions in the West Nile region, including among them an attack on Lodonga mission to the north and harassment of people at Ediofe mission in Arua town.

General consensus across those interviewed was that the massacre started around 9:00am and ended at 10:00am on June 24, 1981. It was raining that morning and the rebels had positioned their anti-aircraft weapons, katyusha rocket launchers, on the football field beside St. Joseph's College and were shooting in the direction of Arua town. As the UNLA soldiers approached, the rebels retreated in the direction of the trading centre further north on Rhino Camp Road. Rather than pursuing the retreating rebels, the soldiers turned in to St. Joseph's College and the Ombaci mission, claiming there were rebels hiding inside, and the massacre ensued. The Red Cross and clergymen tried in vain to stop the shooting, offering the soldiers goods and money to cease their attack. During and after the shooting, soldiers also looted people's possessions and money. These were packed in lorries or carried by abducted persons back to Arua barracks. Some of the abductees were released while others never returned. The injured were taken on a harrowing journey to Angal hospital, 105 kilometres away, while the majority of the survivors fled to exile in the Congo until the end of the war. Those who remained at the mission were left to bury the dead, who numbered between 60

and 100, in two graves that remain at the mission to this day. The survivors overwhelmingly blamed the UNLA for the massacre, but the rebels were also faulted for having stationed themselves so near to the mission and school. The actions of the UNLA soldiers that day amount to crimes against humanity and violate established principles of civilian protection under customary international law. The Government of Uganda is responsible for ensuring the perpetrators are held accountable.

This report presents a detailed account of what took place during the Ombaci Massacre and the lasting effect it has had on the survivors. Due to the length of time which has passed since the massacre took place, researchers faced significant challenges in piecing together the choppy memories of the survivors who are still alive. Many survivors were either too young at the time or are now too old to have strong recollections of what took place. In addition, the massacre was by all accounts extremely chaotic, with groups of soldiers entering from all sides of the school and mission and roving from room to room shooting and looting. This report represents the best possible account of what took place on that fateful day. The report also looks at the motivation behind the massacre and who bears responsibility. We highlight the challenges survivors continue to face and make a number of recommendations which arose from our interviews, chiefly a call for compensation of survivors, as well as support for livelihoods, education, and reconciliation.

## Background

The massacre at Ombaci took place in 1981 during the war between the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and rebel forces composed of former Uganda Army soldiers who went on to make up the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) and pockets of the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF). Following the overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979 by the Liberation Forces (a combination of the TPDF of Tanzania and rebel groups from Uganda), the UNLA was left in control of the West Nile territory of Uganda. Where the Tanzanian soldiers had been generally considered fair by civilians in West Nile, the UNLA soldiers that replaced them were feared. One man JRP spoke to explained:

*As soon as the Tanzanians withdrew in 1980 life became very difficult because our own soldiers, that is UNLA, were looting and killing almost on a daily basis. They were mainly after three things: they wanted property, they wanted people to provide them with food, money, radios, wrist watches and so on; and they wanted women.<sup>1</sup>*

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The UNLA at the time was made up primarily of Acholi and Langi soldiers, and so people in West Nile thought that the ill-treatment they suffered at the hands of the UNLA was a form of revenge for the overthrow of Dr. Milton Obote and the injustices which Idi Amin meted out against the Acholi and Langi peoples.

The UNRF rebels were colloquially known as 'Azaka' (after the fabric they tied on their heads) and were feared alongside the UNLA for the violations they committed against civilians. Accounts of the period note that both groups engaged in murder, rape, looting, destruction of property, and torture of civilians, among other violations. People feared to continue cultivating their land, attending to their businesses, or reporting for work in local health centres. Because of the abuses coming from both sides, the majority of the population of West Nile fled into exile in Congo (then Zaire) or South Sudan (then Sudan).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Grace Andile Acema and Arube William, "Civil Strife in West Nile," pamphlet by Arua Indigenous Resource Development Agency, on

## *Targeting of Religious Missions*

Many people chose to seek refuge in Catholic missions, mistakenly believing they would be safe in places of worship. During the course of this war, UNLA soldiers repeatedly targeted Catholic missions like Ediofe in Arua town and Lodonga and Ombaci missions, among others.

Starting about one year before the Ombaci massacre, religious persons and civilians at Ediofe, the mission in Arua town, began suffering at the hands of UNLA soldiers. One Sister who was at Ediofe at the time remembered the first time the soldiers came to the mission:

*It was around 9am because they had completed their job in [Arua] town. They had blown up some houses [in the town] and there was completely nothing left [for them to loot] in Arua. [When they arrived here they] found our gate locked, so I went there to open it and then they shot right towards my hand. Then I said, "If you shoot I won't find the hole to the padlock and open it. Just stand still till I open it." [The moment] I opened the gate and they came in and started looting.<sup>3</sup>*

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The Sisters were all rounded up by the soldiers, as were the men and the Bishop. When the Sisters requested to be taken to the Bishop, one of the soldiers tried to protect them, but was almost shot by his colleagues:

*He said, "Sisters are people of God I am taking them to Episcopate." They [the soldiers] wanted to shoot him so I put him behind me then I got the other sister and put her in front and said, "Now if they shoot, they shoot me." [Laughs] He took us there. We slept in the house of the Bishop. [...] I had with me other Sisters about six or seven and the girls working at the Convent. The soldiers had to come five or six times to count us during the night to see if we had ran away or not.<sup>4</sup>*

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At another point, the priests and brothers at Ediofe had determined to hide a young boy who had run away from the rebel fighters and came to the mission seeking refuge. UNLA soldiers heard of this boy and proceeded to the mission where they forced all of the religious persons into a room and demanded to know where the young boy was. During the course of their search, they tortured a number of the brothers, threatened to kill them, and demanded payment from the bishop. Eventually they found the boy hiding in the bush and killed him.<sup>5</sup>

At Lodonga, the mission found itself in the crossfire between the rebel forces and the UNLA soldiers in early June 1981. By this time, the majority of civilians in Lodonga had been displaced to Congo, South Sudan, or other parts of West Nile as a result of the brutality which had begun around October 1980. One man who survived the war recalled, "One time the soldiers from Yumbe were patrolling and they came across a man called Janato and killed him."<sup>6</sup> One woman remembered losing her family members shortly before the attack on the mission took place: "My son and husband were selling here at the trading centre when some people from within here came with the soldiers and said they were collaborating

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file at JRP.

3 Key informant interview in Ediofe, 23 October 2013.

4 Key informant interview in Ediofe, 23 October 2013.

5 Key informant interview in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

6 Interview with a 50 year old man in Lodonga, 26 June 2013.



with guerrillas. [The soldiers] beat them, looted everything and went away with them to Yumbe and killed them there.”<sup>7</sup>

At the time, both sides of the fighting assumed that civilians were collaborating with the enemy and regularly punished them. As a result, most of the people had fled to exile. Most of the religious persons had also left Lodonga mission, with the exception of Father Pedrini who insisted on staying to watch over the few Christians who were sheltering in the mission. Because people had survived violence after the overthrow of Amin in 1979 by hiding in the mission, some mistakenly believed they would be safer if they remained at or near the Lodonga mission and paid dearly.

Some time before the attack on Lodonga mission, the rebels had managed to force the UNLA forces to retreat to their barracks in nearby Koboko town. The UNLA regrouped and launched an attack on Lodonga on June 1, 1981, aiming their long-range weapons at the mission where they believed the rebels were retreating. One man's cousin survived the attack and shared with him the terrible story of the day Lodonga mission was attacked:

*When the government's soldiers got reinforcement they began shelling the mission and the areas around. The rebels withdrew, persuading the people in the mission to go away because the force with which the government soldiers were coming was very strong. My cousin refused to go. When he refused to go my uncle, his wife, and my niece also refused to go without him. A big bombshell fell on the room that was sheltering my uncle, his wife and other Christians. My cousin told me that was how those people were killed. Now, when the government soldiers arrived at the scene they began entering the rooms to find the survivors and kill them. They actually found Brother Jacob and [Ipolto] burying my uncle, my stepmother, my aunt, and my niece, and killed them on the spot. There was nothing Father Pedrini could do. He had advised my cousin Augustus to hide in the church behind the tabernacle. Father Pedrini came to look for my cousin because he liked him so much and told him, "Your parents are killed and very many are killed, but they are outside and I cannot bury them with you alone. You know they will come back and kill you, so find a way, you better run away."*<sup>8</sup>

Father Pedrini was left to hastily bury Brother Jacob in the grave he had been digging when he was killed and then he was taken to the barracks after the soldiers had concluded their search for survivors at the mission. The soldiers had attempted to take Father Pedrini's vehicle, but were unable to start it. The next day, the commander returned the vehicle to Father Pedrini and he left Lodonga, smuggling along with him three people he found who had survived the attack on the mission.<sup>9</sup>

The attack on Lodonga foreshadowed what was to come at Ombaci later in the same month of June 1981. As the UNLA was gaining strength against the rebels, they stepped up their campaigns against civilians which would lead to the attack on the thousands of innocent civilians taking shelter at Ombaci.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with a 60 year old woman in Lodonga, 26 June 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with a 50 year old man in Lodonga, 26 June 2013.

<sup>9</sup> JRP was able to compile an incomplete list of those that were killed in or around Londonga around the time when the mission was attacked. See Appendix A.

# METHODOLOGY



JRP researchers interact with female survivors of the Ombaci Massacre.

Ombaci was identified as a topic for a field note in 2012 because of its infamy in the history of West Nile region. An initial scoping visit was carried out in February 2012 by JRP researchers. The team conducted the first field research visit to Ombaci from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013. With the help of a community mobiliser, JRP was able to meet survivors and relatives of victims to carry out initial focus groups and begin identifying witnesses for interviews. During the first focus group discussion, researchers explained the purpose of JRP's research and began collecting the broad facts of what took place at Ombaci. The team also visited the Catholic mission and St. Joseph's College where the massacre took place and where the mass grave is currently located. Photographs and footage of the mission, college, and grave were collected. Interviews were carried out with a number of survivors and key informants during this initial visit.

The second phase of data collection took place from 21 to 24 May 2013, during which the team carried out the majority of individual interviews used in this research. While most survivors came to Ombaci for interviews, some key witnesses were traced to their homes in the surrounding areas. The team also proceeded to two other Catholic missions, at Koboko and Lodonga, which had also been affected by the war in 1980-1981. Plans were made to carry out individual interviews with survivors and relatives of victims in Lodonga during the next field visit.

The third and final phase of data collection was carried out from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013. On 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013, JRP attended the first-ever memorial prayers at Ombaci, organised by a number of the survivors and the West Nile Liberation War Victims' Association.<sup>10</sup> As a result of planning and mobilisation for the prayers, a number of additional survivors of the Ombaci massacre came forward wanting to be interviewed. On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013, researchers concluded individual interviews and focus groups in Ombaci with the remaining survivors. On 26<sup>th</sup> June 2013, the JRP team proceeded to Lodonga where we traced a few of the relatives of victims killed during the attack on Lodonga Mission on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1981. Finally, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013, researchers visited Angal hospital where the victims of the Ombaci

<sup>10</sup> JRP's Community Mobilisation Department facilitated the observance of the memorial prayers at Ombaci.

massacre had been taken for treatment.

Final verification focus groups were conducted with 74 survivors in Ombaci from 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> October 2013. During this final verification, JRP presented the draft report to the survivors for comment. The report was read in English and translated into Lugbara for comment. During the interactions, the survivors provided input towards the title and cover and back pages. They also reviewed and finalised the different sections of the report and recommendations. Finally, they availed a list of the victims and survivors of the Ombaci massacre.

In total, JRP carried out 6 focus group discussions with 106 people. Individual interviews were conducted with 76 survivors or relatives of victims (28 women and 48 men) ranging from 30 to 90 years old. Individuals were identified through community mobilisers with direct knowledge of survivors and snowball sampling. As the trips progressed and word of JRP's research spread, survivors began coming forward of their own accord seeking to be interviewed. Consent was obtained from each person for the use of their testimony or video in JRP's research materials. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in English and Lugbara using local translators; transcripts of each interview were later produced by JRP researchers.

This research was particularly challenging because of the length of time which has passed since the massacre took place (32 years). Memories were often fuzzy or contradictory. The account presented here represents the best possible memory that JRP researchers could recreate from the totality of our interviews. For analysis, interviews were categorised according to the location where survivors reported hiding during the massacre. The writing focuses on a few key areas for which sufficient reliable information was provided. The overall account of what took place, including when the massacre started, the number of the dead, and other particulars, were distilled as best as possible from the pool of interviews and verified directly with survivors through focus group discussions. This report represents the best memory of the community of survivors 32 years after the massacre took place.

# OVERVIEW OF THE OMBACI MASSACRE

During the war, Ombaci mission and St. Joseph's College hosted an estimated 10,000<sup>11</sup> people who had been displaced from their homes as a result of the violence. One respondent summed up the feeling at the time, "We came to the college because of fear. We heard of burning houses and property being destroyed by the Acholi in Vurra and that created fear in us."<sup>12</sup> These civilians sheltered there anywhere from a few days to weeks before the massacre took place. They flocked to Ombaci in particular because it was a Catholic mission and it was the only one where the Red Cross was present. They believed Ombaci would be a safe haven: "We first decided to run away, two kilometres from Ombaci. Then we were told that the Red Cross flag had been raised and they had camped at the mission, so the mission was the safest place for us. They told us that the organisations like Red Cross and the mission were never attacked."<sup>13</sup>



St. Joseph's College Ombaci, Arua

The Red Cross had established a makeshift field clinic that was treating individuals wounded in the violence, regardless of whether they were civilians, rebels, or soldiers. In the days leading up to the massacre, staff from Médecins Sans Frontières were also present at the mission, having been displaced from Arua hospital by fighting in the town.

## The Morning of the Massacre

The rebels had stationed themselves around the mission a few days before the massacre took place, some at the teachers' quarters called Entebbe and others with the anti-aircraft

<sup>11</sup> Interview with a 70 year old man in Katrini, 17 April 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with a 66 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with a 38 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

gun at the football field next to the school.<sup>14</sup> On the morning of the massacre, rebels were preparing to launch an attack against the soldiers based in Arua. One witness remembered, "We were advised not to panic by the rebels, that they were shooting their anti-aircraft and we should not worry."<sup>15</sup> Prior to shooting, the rebels also instructed civilians that pregnant women should lie down<sup>16</sup> and they should fix cotton wool in the ears of children to prevent damage from the anti-aircraft gun.<sup>17</sup>

The rebels' attack reportedly began around 8:00am on the morning of the massacre. It was not long before the UNLA soldiers reached Ombaci from Arua and began exchanging fire with the rebels. Respondents remembered that some of the rebels were "assembled under a mango tree behind the school, but ran away when government soldiers appeared."<sup>18</sup> Still others were cooking on the far side of the mission when a bomb fell on their cooking pot.<sup>19</sup> People ran to the mission when they saw the soldiers approaching.<sup>20</sup> One woman recalled:

*For us, we knew very well that there would be danger because the Red Cross' David and Bernard were saying we should all enter the college. We all went inside because of the bombs they were exchanging. Once inside [the Red Cross and the priests] came and they locked the main gate here [at the front] and then they locked the other main gate there [at the back].<sup>21</sup>*

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Several respondents recalled a rebel called Abiriga who is credited with having shot several UNLA soldiers, who was possibly a commander of the operation. "This man was terrible and he had very good speed and guns. He went and hid himself behind an anthill where he could see the government soldiers and shoot at them. This man shot very many government soldiers."<sup>22</sup> As he was shooting "the bullets were entering through the school fence. And I was watching when the soldiers finally started chasing him. [...] A woman who was running to go to the mission was shot."<sup>23</sup>

The fight between the rebels and UNLA lasted one to two hours before the rebels retreated. "The rebels were using sticks and weak guns. The only big gun the guerrillas had was called anti-aircraft [and] the bullet would take 10 minutes to reach the UNLA soldiers. After that fight when the government soldiers had defeated the rebels, the rebels ran into the mission and passed through to get out to another village."<sup>24</sup> Various witness, both inside and outside the mission at the time, recollected the rebel soldiers retreating on foot and in various Tata lorries further north on the Rhino Camp Road.

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14 Interview (a) with a 62 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

15 Interview with a 68 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

16 Interview with a 60 year old man in Ombaci, 17 April 2013.

17 Interview with a 50 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.; Interview with a 43 year old woman in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

18 Interview with a 65 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

19 Interview with a 69 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

20 Interview with a 53 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

21 Interview with a 57 year old man in Ombaci, 24 June 2013.

22 Interview with a 60 year old man in Ombaci, 17 April 2013.

23 Interview (a) with a 62 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

24 Interview with a 75 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

## Soldiers Invade St. Joseph's College and the Ombaci Mission

According to witness accounts, the UNLA soldiers entered the mission and school around 10:00am, once the rebel soldiers had retreated. They purportedly believed that rebels were hiding inside the mission and school, having chased some rebels over the fence surrounding the compounds. A man who was inside the mission at the time recounted:

*When the Acholi arrived at the college, they said there must be rebels in the college and that they didn't believe that only civilians were occupying the college. They tried to shoot from outside the college and failed, then they crossed through the gate of the mission, went to the mission compound and broke in to the school from the small gate that joins the school to the mission. As soon as they entered the college that is when they started killing people.<sup>25</sup>*

One woman who survived the massacre estimated that “there were about four fronts, some from the teachers' quarters, some from the other brothers' quarter, some from the centre, and some came like that [over the wall] then they poured inside.”<sup>26</sup>

As the soldiers flooded the school and mission, chaos ensued. Witnesses recall people locking themselves in the classrooms, dormitories, workshops, and church of the school. Through the windows they could see people being mowed down by gunfire as they tried to cross the school compound to escape or seek shelter. Soldiers came in from all sides and shot at random in the compound, then they went to the rooms where civilians were taking shelter and continued shooting and looting. Survivors remember the soldiers speaking a combination of Acholi and Swahili.<sup>27</sup>

Accounts collected by JRP paint a picture of what took place in a few rooms of the school and mission. This is by no means a comprehensive account of the massacre, and due to the passage of time it was also difficult for survivors to recall many details. The following sections present snapshots of what occurred in various parts of the school and mission during and after the massacre.<sup>28</sup>

### *St. Joseph's College Church<sup>29</sup>*

In the church, people were shot by bullets flying through the windows and by soldiers who entered from the front of the church and shot toward the altar, as well as by bullets coming from the back door of the church. One respondent claimed they were attacked early in the morning during or shortly after morning prayers.<sup>30</sup>

One man explained how the soldiers entered the church: “Two soldiers broke down the door and fired about five bullets towards the altar. Everybody was lying down, with their heads

<sup>25</sup> Interview with a 66 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with a 58 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Some people could understand Swahili since West Nile region borders D.R. Congo where it is widely spoken, while others could pick up the Acholi because of its similarity to Alur, which is spoken along the border of the West Nile and Acholi regions.

<sup>28</sup> Throughout interviews, survivors referred to the UNLA soldiers as ‘the Acholi’ and to the UNRF fighters as either ‘rebels’, ‘guerrillas’, or ‘Azaka’.

<sup>29</sup> Room 1 on Figure 2.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with a 72 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

flat. And then from the back a bullet came and broke down the door. It caught a woman near me and she died just like that.”<sup>31</sup> A woman who survived the massacre recalled the first time she saw someone shot: “The glass windows of the church were very transparent and a woman was shot running from the church. [...] That was the first time I saw a person being shot in my presence. I was 15 years old.”<sup>32</sup>

Survivors estimated around 100-200 people took refuge in the church.<sup>33</sup> “There were about 6 people killed. [...] The whole church was full, even the altar. People were just grabbing on to the altar squeezing themselves together.”<sup>34</sup> When the firing died down, a woman remembered seeing “soldiers coming into the church in a different uniform and we realized they were government soldiers. They entered the church and moved around identifying people. They would identify five people, take them out of the church and as they turned their backs they would be shot and killed.”<sup>35</sup>

### *St. Joseph's College Kitchen and Dining Hall*

The kitchen, being on the corner edge of the college, seems to have been one of the first places to be attacked. Survivors estimated there were about 30-40 people taking refuge there at the time. Various accounts recalled a heavy bomb falling on the kitchen and soldiers shooting survivors.<sup>36</sup> “We were in the college, I was in the kitchen. The first bomb fell on the roof and a mother with her children died on the spot. Two small kids -- around altogether four with the mother -- they all died.”<sup>37</sup> Another woman lost members of her family and suffered lasting injuries in the kitchen: “I was in the kitchen with my family, we were six in number. One person died and four were injured. I had injuries in my teeth and behind my ear, also on my hands [shows the scar behind her ear].”<sup>38</sup>

As the kitchen was attacked, many people ran for shelter in other parts of the college, mistakenly believing they would be safer hiding elsewhere. “My sister’s child died in the kitchen on the spot. He was seven months old. My son too was burnt on the head and back. We decided to run to the Italian quarters for safety. [...] Four people who came from the kitchen to take refuge were later killed in the Italian quarters.”<sup>39</sup>

One man’s account recalled the soldiers moving on from the kitchen to the dining hall where he and his family were hiding:

*They were shooting through the window because the door was locked. [...] My small son was running around because of the sound of the gun and my wife ran out after him, that was when she was shot in the back. [...] She collapsed inside and I remained with her there until people came to help me carry her to the vehicle to be taken to hospital. From there I was now left holding our small son.”<sup>40</sup>*

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31 Interview with a 63 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

32 Interview with a 45 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

33 Interview with a 72 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013. Interview with a 45 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

34 Interview with a 63 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

35 Interview with a 45 year old man in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

36 Interview with a 65 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

37 Interview (a) with a 52 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

38 Interview with a 50 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

39 Focus group discussion with mail survivors from the kitchen, 26 June 2013.

40 Interview with a 68 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

## *St. Joseph's College Classrooms*

Survivors also had many accounts of hiding in the school classrooms which had been turned into places of refuge for the thousands of people seeking shelter at the college. When the massacre broke out, people ran for cover in the classrooms and barred the doors when possible. Some rooms were left undisturbed, such as the chemistry classroom: "I stayed there while the soldiers were shooting and the soldiers didn't come into the room. They never killed anybody inside our room."<sup>41</sup> One man who was hiding in a laboratory room recalled how the physics teacher saved the lives and property of those hiding by charging a battery for one of the soldiers:

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*[The soldier] came directly to the laboratory room, to the teacher and said, "Where is my battery?" Immediately the teacher went to get the battery from where he had hidden it. He took the battery and gave it to the soldier, who then stood watch in the door as security because there were soldiers who were trying to loot our things.*<sup>42</sup>

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Other rooms were not so lucky. Many people died from bullets coming through the windows as the soldiers were shooting at random in the compound. One woman lost her sister this way: "We were inside standing near the window when they shot my sister. My other sister then told me we should go so we left that room."<sup>43</sup> Another survivor remembered, "There were countless people [who died]. In the classroom where I was, there were very many people, four people died, but there were very many people who died in the compound that I did not count."<sup>44</sup> In the lower block of the school, one man tragically lost all of his children when the soldiers entered the room where they were hiding:

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*I was in the technical school. We were in the lower block with the kids and all the family. We could see through the window, but you only had to peep out briefly, because if you peeped for long they could shoot you. Five soldiers entered and shot people there. We were hiding now among those who had died because those five soldiers were shooting directly at us. I had 12 children; they shot all of my 12 children. My wife and I were the only ones that survived. She was injured and all of our children were killed there.*<sup>45</sup>

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One man narrowly escaped with his life as the attack was called to a halt:

*I was in the senior four classroom; that main building by the main gate. We were more than twenty people. [...] Bullets were still falling on our room, but some of us were hiding under the bed though the majority of the people from our room had run away. From the senior two classroom, the soldiers entered. They got me alone as the only man among women. I was holding my baby in my hands. They ordered me to put the baby down. I did. They ordered me to pick it up again. I did. They made me do this three times. After that they asked me to introduce myself by showing them my graduated tax ticket lest they take me as the person who was firing bullets at them [breaks down crying]. I gave them the ticket. They grabbed it from my hands and threw it on the floor. After that they got a bayonet and pierced the corner of my*

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41 Interview with a 70 year old man in Katrini, 17 April 2013.

42 Interview with a 57 year old man in Ombaci, 24 June 2013.

43 Interview with a 62 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

44 Interview with a 65 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

45 Interview with a 69 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.



*eyebrow and I began to bleed, the blood flowed to my trousers. Immediately after that their commander blew the whistle to stop the attack. That was the point the Red Cross asked us to go and check for our dead ones.*<sup>46</sup>

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### *St. Joseph's College Garage and Carpentry Workshop*

The looting continued for hours after the shooting stopped. In the garage of the school, people had taken shelter in the bay below which you would place a car for repairs. One man recalled surviving the massacre but losing all of his possessions:

*We were hiding inside that hole. All of our luggage was picked up [by the soldiers] and there was some money which was also taken with the luggage. [...] They were saying the reason they were not going to finish [us] was because they were also wounded, so instead we should give them some money. I heard them; I was very near. The person who came to collect my money was injured in the head.*<sup>47</sup>

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In the workshop next to the garage, soldiers similarly spared people and looted possessions instead. One woman whose entire family survived the massacre recounted their time in the workshop:

*We were in that room all gathered hiding under the chairs and under the tables. The Acholi soldiers entered but they were not shooting. They started collecting money from people. After they collected money they left. They did not shoot anyone. In other rooms they shot a lot of people. Even outside. Those who were running around were killed, but the soldiers that entered our room did not kill. Later other soldiers entered, but did not do us any harm. Instead they told us to run, to escape if we loved our lives. We remained inside, but this Red Cross man, David, came in and told us to remain there until he returned. We waited to leave until this man came back. When we were escaping that's when we saw so many dead bodies. Animals, chickens, so many people were all dead.*<sup>48</sup>

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### *St. Joseph's College Front Building*

In the front building of the school people were able to see the arrival of the soldiers very clearly. Several people recalled seeing Commander Oyite Ojok, the head of the UNLA soldiers, either before or after the massacre talking to the soldiers and one of the priests. (For a further discussion of Oyite Ojok's involvement in the massacre, see page 24). In this room, many people were shot through the windows as well as when the soldiers entered the room. A young girl at the time, one survivor recounted how she lost members of her family that day:

*We sat near our aunt in the school, in this front building of the school. I first heard a whistle which was blown and then the shooting started. They were just shooting anyhow. A bullet caught my brother and tore off his forehead. His brain spilled out*

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46 Interview with a 65 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

47 Interview with a 59 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

48 Interview with a 42 year old woman in Naru Sato, 22 May 2013.

onto the floor where it remained . My aunt was also shot and died there. When the shooting stopped I came out and started running anyhow until I found another woman who was also running and took me. I went with her [to Congo.] My father found me there later.<sup>49</sup>

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### *St. Joseph's College Dormitories*

There were two dormitories in the college that are still there to this day. In the California dormitory, survivors recalled some soldiers shooting a number of people until another soldier, possibly a commander, stopped the shooting. One woman recalled multiple soldiers coming into the room where she and her husband were sheltering:

*Now when we were in the room, the soldiers were inside [the school] shooting people. The first one came [into our room] and fired up. After firing, the bullets came down and caught this boy who died. The second one came and shot my husband after covering his face with a hat. The two soldiers did not speak, it was only the gun speaking. Then the third one came in, the commander, and he was shouting, "Why are you killing civilians? We were not sent here to kill civilians! Why are you killing civilians? You must now come out."<sup>50</sup>*

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Another survivor remembered soldiers also coming to the dormitory to ask for money:

*At the beginning these soldiers were entering the rooms in groups. Then one soldier entered our room alone and asked the civilians for money, but the money was finished and he decided to shoot people at random. That was how my father was shot in that dormitory. Only five people survived, I, my mother and two sisters and one elderly man. A bullet entered my leg and a fragment remained. I was operated on to remove it.<sup>51</sup>*

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Another woman recalled soldiers looting bicycles from the dormitory in which she was hiding:

*All of a sudden I saw army men in uniforms with guns in their hands storm the dormitory. There were some bicycles which were locked there. They started removing the padlocks from the bicycles and demanding money from each and every one of us. They went away with the bicycles. There were no casualties except my mother who was shot in the jaw and she was taken to Kuluva Hospital.<sup>52</sup>*

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### *The Ombaci Mission Compound*

In addition to taking refuge in the college, many people sheltered on the large grounds of the mission compound. Survivors recounted that the Red Cross organised a small field clinic on the grounds of the mission where they were treating people from around the community

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49 Interview with a 39 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013

50 Interview (b) with a 48 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

51 Interview with a 50 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

52 Interview with a 60 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

that were wounded in encounters with the rebels or UNLA soldiers. When UNLA soldiers attacked the regional referral hospital in Arua, MSF evacuated the wounded and staff to Ombaci where they joined the Red Cross operation. One health worker's account recalled that this field clinic treated anyone that was wounded, whether civilian, rebel or UNLA. Medical staff took the precaution of removing uniforms from fighters and changing them into civilian clothes before allowing them into the clinic.<sup>53</sup>

When the soldiers arrived, many of these people were caught in the open while others fled for safety in the Italian's quarters. One woman described how the soldiers broke down the gate to the mission and started firing at the approximately 250 people sheltered in the compound:

*When the soldiers attacked, I threw myself down as soon as I heard the first bullet. Immediately the shooting intensified and dead bodies started falling over me. Because I was covered with blood all over my body everyone thought I was dead. They killed my brother on that day.<sup>54</sup>*

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Both people from the mission compound and from the school ran to the Italian priests' quarters thinking it would be the safest place to hide. One man recounted the harrowing escape to the Italians' quarters:

*In the running process people were shot like bees; so many people were falling to the ground. There was a mother who had tied her baby on her back, and as she was running the baby was shot and died. When she reached the father's house to breastfeed the child, she realized that her child was dead. When we reached the fathers' house, we found soldiers in the fathers' house already shooting civilians and they were also using bayonets to stab people. That is how I ended up being hit on my face and got this scar.<sup>55</sup>*

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Survivors from the school kitchen also chose to take refuge in the priests' house only to be confronted with the armed soldiers once more:

*Four people who came from the kitchen to take refuge were killed in the Italians' quarters. When we reached the Italians' quarters we went to the small kitchen. The soldiers then entered and asked for money. [...] They took 50,000/= from me and 800,000/= from my friend Paul. The soldiers then entered another room to the south of the Italian' quarters, we were watching from the window, the men were told to lay down flat and the women stood on the men because the room was small. Another soldier came and told the others not to kill the civilians. We were then told to come out of the room at gunpoint. We came out and the soldiers took us with them to collect dead bodies.<sup>56</sup>*

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with a 63 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with a 46 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with a 51 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Focus group discussion with mail survivors from the kitchen, 26 June 2013.

After the shooting subsided, survivors began collecting the dead and injured and bringing them to the compound in front of the priests' house. Estimates for the number of people killed in the Italians' quarters alone ranged from 21 to 30.

### *The Mission's Carpentry Workshop*

The mission compound also contained several buildings which served as garages and a carpentry workshop. Survivors from the carpentry workshop estimate that around 20 people were hiding there when the soldiers burst in:

*A good number of soldiers entered the room where we were, amongst them there were about three officers who were commanding. One of them ordered everyone to stand up and hold their ID cards in hand so they would identify who we were, but the second officer said it was a waste of time. Instead he said the soldiers should begin to fire on everyone because we were the relatives and parents of the rebels, and immediately they started shooting.<sup>57</sup>*

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One survivor recalled that 17 of the 20 people in the workshop were killed while he himself was wounded:

*I was standing at an angle while they were shooting in our direction. And good enough I also had a lot of property, so a few of [the soldiers] came for these properties, I think that is what saved my life. A few minutes later one of the soldiers returned asking if I could give him some money or property, but because they had already taken all of my things I told the man I didn't have anything to give him. He asked me to sit down which I did and immediately he started shooting. The first bullets missed me; it was the last two that hit me, one on the leg and another one in the buttocks.<sup>58</sup>*

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This man was accompanied by his family members, some of whom are missing to this day, "When the first group went out they took along my two sisters and my one daughter. And they also took one of my sons. Though the two sisters came back after three years, up to date I have not seen the boy. The boy just disappeared."<sup>59</sup>

Several people survived when they were covered by the bodies of the dead. A man who was a young boy at the time recalled, "The soldiers came to the workshop and started shooting. My parents, two sisters, I and a brother had taken refuge in the workshop and they ended up being shot dead. I was young and the dead bodies fell on me and I was covered with blood."<sup>60</sup> A young girl who was shot three times also survived when the bodies of the dead fell on top of her. She was later taken to Angal hospital and continues to suffer from her wounds to this day.<sup>61</sup>

### *The Brothers' Quarters*

While most people tried to hide within the fenced off school and mission, some sought shelter in the brothers' quarters just outside the fence of the mission. One of two survivors

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57 Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

58 Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

59 Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

60 Interview with a 38 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

61 Interview with a 60 year old woman in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

recalled what happened:

*We came here to seek refuge in the mission at the brothers' quarters. When we got here we found the Acholi soldiers had already arrived and we were pushed inside the room. There were 12 in the room and they just started firing guns at us. Ten were killed and there were two who survived. I was one of them, my eye and my hand were affected. I was the first to be taken to Angal hospital because the situation was so serious.*<sup>62</sup>

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## Red Cross and Clergy Attempt to Save Civilians

Survivors from across the college and mission all remembered the bravery of the clergy and Red Cross personnel who tried valiantly to stop the massacre. Witnesses recalled Fathers Mich, Torquato, and Elio, Brothers John, Joseph, and Luz, and two men working for the Red Cross called David and Bernard all doing their best to stop the shooting.<sup>63</sup> In general, witnesses remembered them shouting for the soldiers to stop shooting and giving the soldiers money and property to go away. "The Red Cross and the Priests were there, but the soldiers were not listening to them. They were saying the war should stop, the fighting should stop. They put up their white flag but still the soldiers insisted."<sup>64</sup> One man reported the soldiers confiscated the Red Cross's video cameras and radios.<sup>65</sup>

Many survivors echoed the sentiment of this woman who believes "if the Red Cross had not been there people were not going to remain. All the Red Cross members came without fear to rescue us."<sup>66</sup> A Red Cross worker only known as David was praised repeatedly for his bravery: "The Red Cross people also helped us a lot especially David who was the boss at that time; he was running amidst the bullets to rescue the civilians and give them first aid. He had his radio call as he passed information to other people. One full magazine was shot on him, but he managed to escape the bullets."<sup>67</sup>

When it became clear to the men that arguing for the soldiers to stop shooting was pointless they offered money and goods in exchange for the soldiers' departure: "The Red Cross man, David, and Father Mich brought money. They came out and talked to these soldiers telling them, 'There are no rebels here. These are Christians, don't kill them,' and then after that things became calm."<sup>68</sup> The fathers also "opened for them the food store for them to loot foodstuffs, clothes, and other property that were there in the mission."<sup>69</sup>

When the soldiers finally stopped shooting and looting, the Red Cross was able to mobilise medical personnel and survivors to assist in collecting the injured and the dead. A makeshift clinic was re-established in the mission compound to treat the injured before they were transferred to Angal and the dead were lined up before the Italians' quarters and covered with blankets in preparation for burial.

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62 Interview with a 45 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

63 JRP was able to speak with Father Elio, though we were unable to trace the others.

64 Interview with a 62 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

65 Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

66 Interview (b) with a 48 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

67 Interview with a 60 year old woman in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

68 Interview with a 68 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

69 Interview with a 60 year old man in Ombaci, 15 April 2013.

# THE AFTERMATH



The Ombaci Massacre Memorial site, where victims of the massacre are buried in a mass grave.

In the aftermath of the shooting and looting by UNLA soldiers, some survivors fled immediately to exile, while others were forced to carry looted goods to the army barracks in Arua. The injured awaited transport to Angal hospital, the closest of the open hospitals in West Nile region, but still 105 kilometres and several hours and roadblocks away. Able-bodied survivors who had not fled the mission were asked to assist with the most gruesome task: digging the mass graves and burying the dead.

## Abducted Persons

After the shooting ceased and the looting was completed, soldiers selected survivors to load the looted goods onto lorries. When they became full, people were forced to carry the remaining goods all the way back to Arua to the military barracks. One man, who was a young boy at the time, recalled, "There were more than 100 people who carried those goods. They looted clothes, foodstuffs, and other items belonging to those escapees. After carrying those goods to the town they were released by the soldiers ."<sup>70</sup> One woman who was forced to carry goods to Arua suffered tremendously, "They had looted many things including clothing and got some of us who had hidden in the Italians' quarters to carry these goods. [The soldiers raped me] at the airfield. That was when we took the luggage at the airfield."<sup>71</sup> Other women were also raped before being let go by the soldiers, while some women were reportedly kept by the soldiers for years before they returned home. Many of the abductees that were let go on that day fled immediately to exile, though some, like the young boy above, returned to Ombaci looking for family members who had survived the massacre.

## Transferring the Wounded to Angal Hospital

After the massacre, those who were critically wounded were transferred to Angal Hospital for treatment. One woman who worked at Angal at the time recalled the morning they received word that the wounded would be arriving:

*We received a message by radio at 9:00am at Angal saying that they [the Red Cross]*

<sup>70</sup> Interview with a 44 year old man in Anivu, 23 May 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with a 53 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

were coming with wounded people. We prepared what we could because the hospital was full and it was the last hospital in West Nile. Arua hospital had been destroyed so there was no functional hospital. We prepared ourselves by collecting some water in the barrels because at that time the water would come slowly from the tank. We prepared food as well. And then all the verandas were full of government soldiers because they were afraid of going to fight so they pretended they were sick and stayed in the hospital. There was not a single place left [at the hospital].

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For the injured, the trip to Angal was a harrowing journey which some did not survive. Medical personnel and volunteers had loaded the wounded into several lorries, which were stopped twice by UNLA soldiers at roadblocks for several hours:

*We were carried in the vehicle to be taken to Angal hospital in Nebbi district, but we were stopped on the way as we reached Bondo roadblock and another bundle of money was given again [to let us pass]. In Bondo barracks, we were stopped again. Those who were on drips, the drips were plucked off, those with bandages, their bandages were removed by the soldiers and their wounds were left open. The soldiers just wanted to finish us. For over two hours we were stopped at the barracks and we finally left for the hospital.<sup>72</sup>*

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Another survivor recalled David of the Red Cross trying to stop the soldiers from hurting the injured people:

*I was in the range rover with David, when the soldiers had begun misbehaving. He went to the barracks and talked to the commander and the commander tried to stop the soldiers from being harsh, but he couldn't do it because the soldiers had become rowdy. They started hitting the windows of the Range Rover, other soldiers were breaking the windows of the Scania [lorry] as they removed the drips from the injured people. Because of this, those who really needed the drips died. We reached the hospital at 10 pm. [...] When we reached the hospital the news about the massacre had spread everywhere, the nurses and doctors were waiting for the injured people and when we reached, they started weeping as they quickly worked on the people.<sup>73</sup>*

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There were 200 injured and 17 dead when the lorries finally arrived at 11:00pm. All but one of the dead were men whose drips and bandages were removed at the roadblock causing their death. The sole woman who died suffered complications as a result of a severely smashed leg which had to be amputated. The survivors and medical personnel that made it to Angal remained there anywhere from several weeks to several months recovering from injuries or treating patients. The hospital matron who helped treat the survivors recalled that 50 of them were discharged quickly, while the others remained for a long time recuperating. The survivors were mainly women and children. She remembered seeing only one man among the living that were brought from Ombaci. She added:

*The men all ran away to Congo. It was terrible because there was a mother who had three children and found all of them after three days because you take one here, one*

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<sup>72</sup> Interview with a 60 year old woman in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with a 47 year old man in Ombaci, 26 June 2013.

*there and the mother went with one child who had two fingers missing from one hand and more three fingers missing from the second hand. So the young child had five of his fingers blown off by the bullets. Just imagine how the young children screamed! And this one being young could not stand this pain, he saw the 'red water' massively flowing from the lorry, he saw the women crying, the children crying. It was terrible.*<sup>74</sup>

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The 17 dead were all buried at Angal hospital and remain there to this day. Those that survived and received treatment at the hospital all eventually fled to exile as they waited for the war to end.

## Fleeing to Exile

After the massacre, the Red Cross attempted to transfer the remaining survivors at Ombaci to refugee camps in Congo. One survivor recalled ten lorries being loaded with people to be transported: "We boarded, but the Acholi already had their barrack at Manibe. [...] When we reached there, they stopped us and demanded to know where we were going. They said 'No, either these people must be killed or taken back.' They stopped us and we were brought back to the college."<sup>75</sup> Most of those who were brought back to the college ended up fleeing on foot to the Congo through treacherous territory controlled by the rebels and UNLA soldiers. Survivors recounted terrifying experiences running through the bush and being shot at or having to hide various times along the way. A group of girls suffered terribly in their attempt to flee, "I ran past the valley after Ombaci and was raped by the soldiers. We were five girls in number and all of us were raped. The soldiers were six in number."<sup>76</sup>

## The Mass Grave

Survivors JRP spoke with were asked to estimate the number of people killed during the massacre. This was a daunting question for several reasons. First, so much time had passed that memories were patchy and unreliable. Furthermore, many people did not stay in the mission long enough after the massacre to see the graves being dug or count the dead. Understandably, no formal documentation or count of the dead was done before the burials took place.

Survivors recalled the Red Cross and the priests organising people to collect the dead from the various rooms and line them up before the Italians' quarters where they were covered in blankets. One woman remembered how these people came to be buried where the mass graves are today: "[Brother Joseph] and late Father Michy and Brother John and Brother Luz decided to give the burial place for the people to be buried."<sup>77</sup> Volunteers from among the survivors worked to dig the graves while others looked on.

Witnesses' recollections of the number and size of the graves varied widely, as did the length of time it took to bury the dead and when the burial started. One woman, a young girl at the time of the massacre, remembered the burial taking place over the course of two

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74 Key informant interview in Ediofe, 23 October 2013.

75 Interview with a 66 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

76 Interview with a 46 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

77 Interview (a) with a 49 year old woman in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.



days.<sup>78</sup> One man thought the burial began.

*That very day at 5pm. [...] They began to put the dead bodies in it beginning with those ones who were big, to the ones who were medium and smallest. [...] The number I managed to count were 48. But I did not participate in the next burial which took place a day after. The second burial happened because more bodies were collected.*<sup>79</sup>

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One man who took part in the burial described the graves: “There were 2 graves, quite big ones [draws out rectangle shapes on the ground]. They were packed in a line and then covered with a blanket.”<sup>80</sup> Another man added, “[They were] in a square form, two of them, they were now packing dead bodies inside. They were buried separately, men and women. I participated by carrying those dead bodies to the grave.”<sup>81</sup> Another man added that “after piling the first lot of dead bodies, Red Cross brought in more blankets which they covered the first lot with. The second lot was piled and again covered with blankets until the pits were all filled up.”<sup>82</sup> A third man who witnessed the burial recalled that one grave “was very big, the second one was medium.”<sup>83</sup>

Still other survivors believed there are three or four graves, as the site today bears four crosses in a square shape. “*That day there were three graves dug and* <sup>87</sup> *people were buried then the next day in the morning more 10 bodies were bought again and another grave was dug. Making it 4 graves and 97 people were buried.*”<sup>84</sup> Another man remembers two graves being dug in his presence, but he left shortly thereafter thus he believes two additional graves were dug after his departure:

*We started gathering dead bodies and we buried them in 2 graves in my presence, the children and adults were all buried differently. The people were buried in rows horizontal and vertically. There were 4 bodies per row horizontally and 6 bodies vertically and a total of 64 bodies were buried. [...] Then I left and went home, the rest of the dead bodies were buried in my absence.*<sup>85</sup>

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A group of men who had survived the attack on the kitchen also participated in the burial of the dead:

*We collected 64 dead bodies and 3 graves were dug. The first grave had adult men and young male children buried together, the second grave had the adult women and young girls, buried together in the grave then the third had a mixture of both the adult and young children because we were tired. The rows were vertical and horizontal the adult men and women who were tall were buried vertically and the children were buried horizontally. In all the three graves, the vertical rows had 8 bodies wrapped up in blankets and the horizontal rows had the small children buried in 6 bodies per row wrapped up with blankets in all the graves. The women and young girls were buried*

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78 Interview a 36 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

79 Interview with a 65 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

80 Interview (b) with a 48 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

81 Interview with a 58 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

82 Interview with a 66 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

83 Interview with a 59 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

84 Interview with a 50 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

85 Interview with a 61 year old man in Ombaci, 26 June 2013.

*together and the men and young boys were also buried together. The third grave had a mixture of men, women, young boys and girls because we were tired. After the burial we all went home in the villages and we don't know about the fourth grave. Other people say that the fourth grave was for the people who were killed outside the mission but their bodies were gathered and brought in to be buried in the mission.*<sup>86</sup>

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Another young girl who survived the massacre and witnessed her family being buried also remembered, "Three graves were dug and the dead bodies were wrapped up in blankets and buried in rows. My parents and brother were also buried in the mass grave. I can't tell how many people were killed in general; those buried in the mass grave in my presence were 68 dead bodies."<sup>87</sup> No one JRP spoke to had directly participated in the digging of a fourth grave for those who were killed outside the mission, but many of the survivors JRP met vividly remembered two or three graves being dug on the day of the massacre and the day after.

The total number of those that were buried is also a mystery. Numerical estimates come in anywhere between 50 to over 100 dead. It is important to note that a number of people killed in the wider community were reportedly buried in the mass grave and a number of people killed during the mission massacre were buried at their homes. A tragic example involves the man who lost his 12 children in the massacre:

*My children were buried this side alone [gestures across the road from the mission]. They only buried Christians there [in the mission] but as mine were Muslims they were buried aside. There were Muslims [who survived] around that day so they selected the people they knew were Muslims and put them aside. [They] were buried separately, not all together as they did in the mission, only that now they were in a very closed area. I learned [this] later from a man called Mahmood. He told me he is the one who buried the children and showed me when I came back. He told me there were about 25 Muslims that died.*<sup>88</sup>

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Given such instances, the passage of time and the unreliability of memory, it is impossible to estimate the exact number of people killed during the Ombaci massacre. The only way to ascertain the number and size of the graves and who was buried where would be to exhume the area, something which the community and mission feel is unnecessary. Ultimately, for the survivors and the families of the victims, the number of dead is not so important as it is to remember and honour them in some way, such as through the annual memorial prayers which were started this year.

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86 Focus group discussion with mail survivors from the kitchen, 26 June 2013.

87 Interview with a 38 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

88 Interview with a 69 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

# MOTIVATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

Witnesses JRP spoke with were asked to speculate as to the motivation of the soldiers in carrying out this massacre. The majority believed it to be an act of revenge for the treatment that the Acholi people had received at the hands of Idi Amin's soldiers when he was in power. One survivor's statement sums up the feeling of most of the survivors:

*[The soldiers] came and were asking the civilians in Acholi that "mama na tye kwene? (where is my mother?), baba na tye kwene? (where is my father?)." As you failed to answer they would shoot you and blow a billa (horn)." After shooting you they would stab you using a knife [to make sure you were dead]. We think they used these words because in 1979 there was war between the West Nile people and the Acholi during Amin's regime. Amin and his soldiers killed very many people [from Acholi]. Therefore these soldiers were revenging on the West Nile people. That is why they were asking the civilians "mama na tye kwene, baba na tye kwene, latin na tye kwene" meaning "where is my mother, where is my father, where is my child," implying their mothers, fathers and children were killed by Amin's soldiers and these people were revenging [sic].<sup>89</sup>*



A survivor displays the scar left by bullet wounds as a result of the attack on Ombaci.

In terms of who survivors blame for the massacre, both the UNLA soldiers and the rebels were deemed responsible. While the soldiers were directly blamed for the killings and looting, the rebels were also blamed for inciting the fighting by stationing themselves next to the mission and school. One man explained:

<sup>89</sup> Interview with a 60 year old woman in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

*I quite personally blame the government soldiers because there was nothing to provoke them. If we were caught in crossfire we would have known this because they would have been fighting each other, firing on either side. But they [the government soldiers] just purposefully came there when guerrillas had already withdrawn. They could have followed them [the rebels], instead they branched and entered the compound of the mission where we were.<sup>90</sup>*

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For other survivors, the UNLA soldiers were to blame for precisely targeting the civilians: “They actually intended to shoot us; they would first see us and then they would shoot. They were not shooting anyhow.”<sup>91</sup> The soldiers claimed they believed there were rebels hiding among the civilians, yet still survivors questioned their actions:

*I blame the UNLA soldiers. To me these soldiers thought all civilians were the guerrilla rebels and they just came shooting anybody. But I then question myself why were they shooting the young children? Babies died; young girls and boys were killed. Couldn't they identify that these young children were not guerrillas?<sup>92</sup>*

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With regard to the rebels, the reason for blaming them was simple to the survivors: “For us we blame the rebels because if they had not come this way there would not have been fighting at the mission.”<sup>93</sup> In addition, other survivors blamed them for having caused the war and displacement in the first place: “I blame the rebels because they are the ones who forced us out of home to meet this trouble.”<sup>94</sup> “I blame the rebels because without them there was not going to be war here.”<sup>95</sup>

From a legal perspective, the UNLA soldiers were responsible for serious violations of international law for which the Government of Uganda is still responsible. The murders and looting clearly amount to crimes against humanity. In addition, what makes the Ombaci massacre such an egregious violation was the deliberate targeting of civilians, a religious mission and of clergy and ICRC personnel. Civilians and ICRC personnel are explicitly protected in instances of non-international armed conflict such as this one under Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions which govern the conduct of war.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, the Fourth Geneva Convention's Additional Protocol II relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts prohibits the targeting of religious sites as well as religious and humanitarian personnel such as the Ombaci clergy and the staff of the ICRC.<sup>97</sup> Though Uganda had yet to ratify Additional Protocol II in 1981 when the Ombaci massacre took place, the ICRC is of the opinion that these protections form part of customary international law and the Government of Uganda can therefore be held responsible.<sup>98</sup>

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90 Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

91 Interview with an 80 year old woman in Anivu, 17 April 2013.

92 Interview with a 60 year old man in Ombaci, 15 April 2013.

93 Interview with a 58 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

94 Interview with a 65 year old man in Ombaci, 25 June 2013.

95 Interview (b) with a 48 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

96 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287, available at: <http://www.icrc.org/ihi.nsf/INTRO/380>.

97 International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II)*, 8 June 1977, 1125 UNTS 609, available at: <http://www.icrc.org/ihi.nsf/INTRO/475?OpenDocument>.

98 “Examples of rules found to be customary and which have corresponding provisions in Additional Protocol II include: *the prohibition of attacks on civilians; the obligation to respect and protect medical and religious personnel, medical units and transports; the obligation to protect medical duties; the prohibition of starvation; the prohibition of attacks on objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian*

Even survivors of the massacre were aware of the fact that the Red Cross could not be targeted, as one person noted, “Red Cross had put their flag. Internationally if you have a Red Cross then soldiers can’t attack them.”<sup>99</sup> Survivors believe the Government is responsible regardless of the legal reasoning and have called for acknowledgement and compensation (see “Recommendations” on page 29).

## Commander Oyite Ojok

When survivors were asked if they could recall who was in charge of the UNLA soldiers that attacked Ombaci, many mentioned Oyite Ojok.<sup>100</sup> Commander Ojok, a long-time military man, had risen to a powerful position in the army and was appointed Army Chief of Staff under President Milton Obote when he returned to power in December 1980. From 1981 until his death in 1983, Ojok was in charge of fighting several insurgencies including that of Museveni’s National Resistance Army and that of the Uganda National Rescue Front in West Nile.

Survivors’ accounts of Ojok were mixed, with some people claiming he came the day before the massacre, while others recalled seeing him that morning and still more believed he came to the mission after the massacre or even several days later. Oyite Ojok seemed to be an important figure in the memories of survivors as well as other community members who were not present at Ombaci but have nevertheless heard the stories of the massacre.

While it is impossible to know whether or exactly when Ojok was present at Ombaci, those survivors who participated in verification of the report generally agreed that Ojok had visited the mission only once after the massacre. They recalled him arriving around 11am and staying for about one hour. One man who was hiding in the workshop of the school shared his memory of the day:

*Oyite Ojok came and said that if an elephant enters a field of sim sim can he not crush the sim sim? He was talking about [the civilians] and that [Ombaci] is not a place where people should be packed. I saw when he was talking. [...] He was talking in Swahili, and he was also talking a bit of English. He was talking to the Parish Priest in the football ground in front of the college. The soldiers and other people were also there. They were saying this is not a refugee camp, so why should people be packed there.<sup>101</sup>*

Several other survivors’ recollections match this account:

*The army commander called Oyite Ojok came at a time when the soldiers had stopped killing. He addressed the civilians, but in a very harsh way. He said that he would*

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population; the obligation to respect the fundamental guarantees of civilians and persons *hors de combat*; the obligation to search for and respect and protect the wounded, sick and shipwrecked; the obligation to search for and protect the dead; the obligation to protect persons deprived of their liberty; the prohibition of forced movement of civilians; and the specific protections afforded to women and children. [Italics added].” Jean-Marie Henckaerts (2005). “Study on customary international humanitarian law: A contribution to the understanding and respect for the rule of law in armed conflict.” *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87, pp 175-212.

<sup>99</sup> Key informant interview in Opit, March 2013.

<sup>100</sup> One survivor also recalled “a commander called engineer Abaragari.” (Interview with a 60 year old woman in Ombaci, 16 April 2013). No other names of possible commanders were mentioned during interviews.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with a 59 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

*rather laugh with a dead Lugbara than the one who is alive. He continued and said that the report had reached him that all the civilians were dead, so how come he found people alive.*<sup>102</sup>

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*[He] said in the Kiswahili that he received information that all the Lugbara were dead. [He said] he was shocked to see so many Lugbara still alive. He said that he would only laugh with a dead Lugbara than the one who is alive, and then he also said that Lugbara were very lucky people, they should stay well and know that they would be granted security – no soldiers would come to disturb them again.*<sup>103</sup>

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From the way survivors spoke about him, it is clear the majority of them believed him to be a negative, threatening presence and the person responsible for the overall command of the UNLA soldiers that attacked Ombaci. Oyite Ojok died in 1983 in a helicopter crash making it impossible for JRP to seek clarification on the many accounts collected from survivors of the Ombaci massacre.

## CHALLENGES

The survivors of the Ombaci massacre face significant challenges as a result of what occurred. Over 30 years later, the effects of the massacre are still felt on a daily basis. Survivors' primary problems relate to poverty arising from their loss of property during the massacre and the war. In addition, many people have ongoing health complications. Survivors who were children at the time of the war had their education interrupted when they fled to exile or lost their parents. As a result, many have been unable to earn a living to provide an education for their own children; the effects of the Ombaci massacre are being felt by the next generation. Survivors still struggle to cope with the loss of loved ones during the massacre, and the community still counts many missing as a result of being abducted by the soldiers or fleeing to exile and being separated from their families never to be heard from again.

### Poverty

Almost all of the survivors interviewed mentioned poverty as the primary challenge they have faced since the massacre. Survivors stressed that people lost everything during the massacre, either to looting from the soldiers or from having to leave their property behind when they fled to exile. People have struggled to restart their lives. One man's experience was representative of the way survivors have struggled, "It is very painful to me. I lost my business as a fishmonger. All I had at hand were lost. My children suffered because I could not afford anything."<sup>104</sup>

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102 Interview with a 51 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

103 Interview with a 61 year old man in Ombaci, 26 June 2013.

104 Interview with a 66 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

## Lost loved ones

Most survivors JRP spoke to lost at least one family member in the Ombaci massacre. In one heartbreaking account, an elderly man painfully explained how he came to lose everything, “I had 12 children, they shot all of my 12 children. My wife survived, but the children, all of them were killed. We left everything of ours here and went barehanded. They burnt even houses, when we came back we didn’t find a house.”<sup>105</sup> Beyond the profound sadness of losing a family member and being unable to bury them properly in the homestead, survivors also suffered trickle down effects from losing family members who were providers (whether husbands or parents). Many children were orphaned as a result of the Ombaci massacre and had to fend for themselves or stay with elderly family members who were unable to provide properly for them. By all accounts the orphans of the Ombaci massacre have really suffered.

## Loss of Education

Many of the survivors were children at the time of the massacre and suffered greatly as a result. One man who was a youth at the time explained:

*The massacre affected the educational standards of many young children and youths because they lost their parents who were the ones responsible for paying their school fees. This event also led to early marriages of the girls. This was because they could not cater for their needs and responsibilities; therefore the girls thought getting married was the best option.*<sup>106</sup>

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Another man explained that “the standards of education decreased because of the war,” which required them to move around and interrupted their education.<sup>107</sup> One woman left in the care of her elderly grandmother recalled how she came to drop out of school:

*Education became a problem because there was no one to take care of me and meet my responsibilities. My parents died in the massacre and when we reached Congo my two sisters also died because of poor medication. My other sisters could not help because they did not have enough sources of income, my grandmother was then very old and I too had to take care of her.*<sup>108</sup>

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This loss of education coupled with generalised poverty has trickled down to survivors’ children. Parents who were themselves orphaned or had to drop out of school as a result of the war find it difficult to meet the requirements to send their own children to school. Thus in several families where the previous generations were upwardly mobile – training to be engineers, doctors, or lawyers and working in Kampala, for example – this generation and their children are stuck at home farming, unable to pursue even basic education. As one orphan put it:

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with a 69 year old man in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with a 50 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with a 60 year old woman in Ombaci, 16 April 2013.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with a 38 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

*My father died when I was in primary five and I struggled, suffered as an orphan because of his death. Then should my children also suffer because I am not educated and I don't have the capital to start up a business to take care of my children? This means that new generations will still suffer because of the same incident.*<sup>109</sup>

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## Health Complications

Survivors of the Ombaci massacre have also had to cope with various health complications arising from injuries incurred during the massacre or when they fled to exile. One man explained, "Because the civilians underwent a lot of torture and injuries some ended up with permanent or partial disabilities, others with fragments and bullets in their bodies. Above all most of these people cannot afford proper health services for them get better."<sup>110</sup>

One woman was shot in the head during the massacre which paralyzed one side of her body:

*When I was shot on my head, I became unconscious. I only woke up to realize I was in the hospital and was told that it was Red Cross that took me there. I stayed in the hospital for three months until I recovered but I was not the same. I was paralyzed at only twelve years of age. From the hospital I could not walk or even use a crutch, I was only able to crawl on my buttocks. That went on for a very long time until I recovered slowly. Since that thing happened to me, I have a kind of short circuit in my brain. I faint a lot and that even stopped me from going to school.*<sup>111</sup>

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Another man almost lost his leg after being shot by the soldiers who looted all of his property and abducted his children:

*Here in Arua they just wanted to amputate my leg because there was no drug which could be effective so the doctor here recommended I should allow my leg to be amputated. I just told him, "No I cannot allow that. Let me go to other places first." Luckily when I went to Mulago [hospital] they gave me these new drugs and it got healed. Even recently it just got healed, these are current wounds [shows his injured leg]. Now I must ride my bicycle slowly and I cannot run. Even if I'm caught by rain I have to walk, because I cannot run. And I cannot stand on both feet to dig because this leg is weak.*<sup>112</sup>

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One woman who spoke with JRP admitted to suffering a miscarriage as a result of the katyusha rocket launcher which the rebels had placed near the mission: "There was also a very big gun which was placed near the primary school. And that was a very heavy gun, when they were shooting it caused me to abort because of the vibration."<sup>113</sup>

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109 Interview with a 50 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

110 Interview with a 50 year old man in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.

111 Interview with a 45 year old woman in Ombaci, 22 May 2013.

112 Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

113 Interview with a 58 year old woman in Ombaci, 23 May 2013.



## The Missing

To this day many members of the community are missing. Some were abducted, never to return and others were lost in the chaotic rush to exile. *“So many people ran to other places leaving their relatives at the mission and they have never returned. So their relatives are not sure whether they are alive or not. Therefore the missing persons are many and they are being looked for by their relatives.”* The issue of the missing is complicated by the fact that it is impossible to know whether someone was killed and buried at the mission, died in exile, or was abducted and died elsewhere. One man whose sisters were abducted but later returned (and have since died) explained how the community has tried to trace the missing abductees:

*Up to this time we tried to follow up by inquiring through army headquarters and so on. They don't seem to have any records. We don't know what happened to the others. In fact since then we thought the government would be courageous enough to come and meet the people. How do you reconcile? How do you talk about reconciliation when you have not met the people, you have not heard how hurt they are? Unless you know the extent to which someone is hurt, the losses, the sufferings and so on.<sup>114</sup>*

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Father Alex of Ombaci Catholic Mission leading the Ombaci Massacre memorial prayers on 24 June 2013 in Ombaci, Arua.

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with a 78 year old man in Arua, 16 April 2013.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the many challenges they are facing, survivors also had several recommendations for how the Government of Uganda and/or NGOs could help them address these challenges. Their recommendations are as follows:

## To the Government of Uganda:

**Compensate survivors for losses of property and loved ones.** Almost every survivor JRP spoke to was adamant about calling for compensation for all that was lost as a result of the Ombaci massacre. Lost property should be replaced or compensated. And though lost loved ones can never be replaced, survivors called for monetary compensation from the Government. Survivors viewed this as their right and as the best way for the government to acknowledge the wrongdoing that took place at Ombaci. In addition, there is need to provide financial support for the families of victims and survivors to enable them live in dignity.

**Provide financial support for education and/or vocational training opportunities for survivors and their children.** The majority of survivors either had their education interrupted or have been unable to properly educate their children. Survivors want the financial resources to send their children, or even themselves, to school. In addition, survivors appeal for the establishment of a vocational training centre to enhance vocational training required to help them rise out of poverty.

**Truth telling by the perpetrators is necessary to promote reconciliation with victims.** Survivors noted that many of the perpetrators of the Ombaci massacre may still be living, therefore they should be required to come forward and tell the truth of what happened that day. Many people would like to see the perpetrators that remain alive held responsible in some way. **Organising seminars for peace and reconciliation could be one of the ways to promote truth telling**

## To the Government of Uganda and NGOs working in the region:

**Provide livelihood support.** Government and NGOs working in the region should put in place livelihoods support programs in animal husbandry and farming to address issues of poverty.

**Support survivors as they do ex-combatants.** Survivors found it deeply unfair that the Government and NGOs have provided financial and other support to ex-combatants of the wars in West Nile while doing nothing for them. Similar support programs should be put in place for the survivors of these wars in order to foster reconciliation and help redress this feeling of resentment toward former combatants.

**Provide health support for survivors.** Many survivors noted that until now their health needs are not properly handled. Therefore they request for a specific health centre to address their specific health needs.

**Support inter-tribal reconciliation efforts.** Survivors often noted that the people of West Nile have not been properly reconciled with the Acholi, who they see as the primary perpetrators of the Ombaci massacre. Organisations working in peace and reconciliation should make efforts to bridge the divide that still exists between these two regions.

# APPENDIX A – Partial List of Victims and Survivors of the Ombaci Massacre

## Buried in the mass grave

*Name, Village, Parish*

*Dadamu sub-county*

1. Aniku Jackson, Yapi, Kuluva
2. Matia, Gitiku, Kuluva
3. Yosa Aseni Banyar, Asuru, Tanganyika
4. Asumani Onziga, Asuru, Tanganyika

*Katrini sub-county*

5. Ajidiru, Areanyori, Wandi
6. Adamu Adigasi, Kuli Olua

*Manibe sub-county*

7. Bileru Sara, Ombaci
8. Wadri Yoasi, Tiavu, Ombaci
9. Andima Paskwale, Ombaci
10. Andima Cosma, Vura, Ombaci
11. Ocokoru Veronica, Vura, Ombaci
12. Zokoa Zebio, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
13. Anjilina Eyotaru, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
14. Florence Driciru, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
15. Acidri Simon, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
16. Aniku Jackson, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
17. Ezaru Kevin, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
18. Lekuru Suzan, Vura Gituku, Ombaci
19. Anjelina Anyako, Andivu, Ombaci
20. Afimani Patrick, Vura Gituk, Ombaci
21. Dema Yosia, Ombaci
22. Edebile Valerio Anikani, Ombaci
23. Bayo James, Ombaci
24. Dragubo Valerio, Ombaci
25. Angunda Bepino, Ombaci
26. Okusaru Rekeli, Ombaci
27. Bako Betty, Ombaci
28. Abeti Cyrilo, Ombaci
29. Driciru Mary, Robu

30. Ezuma Francis, Ombaci
31. Alonzi Richard, Ombaci
32. Orio William, Obavu, Ombaci
33. Tilia Jino, Obavu, Ombaci
34. Odrabua Barino, Ombaci
35. Ajionji Nataniale, Ombaci
36. Ajiko Tereza, Ombaci
37. Asia Antony, Olivu Maracha, Ombaci
38. Mateyo Eguamayi, Olivu Maracha, Ombaci
39. Asua Moses, Olivu Maracha, Ombaci
40. Asianzu Joel, Olivu A, Ombaci
41. Natali, Olivu A, Ombaci
42. Ejuru Elevira, Olivu A, Ombaci
43. Candiru Anna, Ambutua Obavu B, Ombokoro
44. Wadria Luka, Ekarakafe, Odravu
45. Onzima George, Tiavu, Ombokoro

## Survivors of the massacre

*Name, Village, Parish*

1. Abiko Grace
2. Abiko Grace, Andivu
3. Acidri Robert
4. Adiru Jilda
5. Adramasi Constantine
6. Adroaa Loson
7. Agasi Charles
8. Ajikia Magirita
9. Akuaku Peter
10. Alice Gasi
11. Alifadah Mulal
12. Andama Ben
13. Angabo
14. Angujeru Paula
15. Arikanzil Anguto
16. Asega Ayikoa
17. Asiandu Robert
18. Asunita Mundua
19. Atiku George
20. Attanduru Hellen
21. Avuru Hawa
22. Ayikoa George
23. Bako Betty
24. Bako Mariata

25. Ben Ayikoa
26. Betty
27. Betty Ezaru
28. Buru Shema, Dadamu
29. Candiru Ketura
30. Candiru Rose
31. Cosamori
32. Driwaru Tereza, Orawa Central
33. Edokibo Wilson
34. Ejidra Ronald
35. Emuzaa
36. Enaru Esther
37. Etukaru Sabina
38. Ezatibo Noel Ceasor
39. Filiam Anguzu
40. Gasi Hellen
41. George Ezutre
42. Grace
43. Hellen
44. Isaac Asumi
45. Jeska Ajidiru, Tiavu
46. Juliata Ndemaru
47. Maria Adrapia
48. Mario Kelemete, Andivu
49. Maritina Mary
50. Mary Orodriyo
51. Matia Agataa
52. Mawa Joseph
53. Nguonzia Cosmas
54. Obiguma Nason, Ombaci
55. Odipio Chirilo
56. Okitaa Lugi
57. Okurunya Peter, Olivu A
58. Ondoru Elena
59. Oria Manuel
60. Orio Peter
61. Philista Ayikoa
62. Pileota
63. Pio Eriku
64. Piriyo Franco
65. Rose Candiru
66. Samuel Drasiku
67. Stella Orodriyo
68. Thomas Araku
69. William Awibo
70. Yitia Polina
71. Zacia Tereza
72. Amabua Donato, Otrevu, Ayivu

*Manibe sub-county*

73. Avutibo Marcello, Mingoro, Luffe
74. Anyaadule Luji, Aliamu,

## Appendix B – Partial List of Victims and Survivors of the Ombaci Massacre

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 75. Ombaci<br>Pario Valerio, Ngao,<br>Ombaci          | 103. Adravu<br>Erejo Geofery,<br>Ekarakafe, Adravu | 131. Emmanueal Elilia,<br>Obavu B, Ombokoro        |
| 76. Adroma Jasindo, Ngau,<br>Ombaci                   | 104. Orijaru Lusi, Odravu,<br>Adravu               | 132. Dema Philip, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro             |
| 77. Diku Benedicto, Andivu,<br>Ombokoro               | 105. Erima Anthony, Odravu,<br>Adravu              | 133. Olida Draru, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro             |
| 78. Asunita Agasi, Andruvu,<br>Ombokoro               | 106. Enira Geofery, Odravu,<br>Adravu              | 134. Atiku Albert, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro            |
| 79. Omviru Anceta,<br>Andruvu, Ombokoro               | 107. Afimani Daniel, Odravu,<br>Adravu             | 135. Enzoa Micheal, Obavu<br>B, Ombokoro           |
| 80. Anceta Omviru, Obavu,<br>Ombokoro                 | 108. Afimani Mathias, Bura,<br>Lufe                | 136. Aziku Paul, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro              |
| 81. Obeti Sam, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro                   | 109. Ajedra Philiam, Bura,<br>Luffe                | 137. Julliana Asuru, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro          |
| 82. Wadiyo Josephine,<br>Obavu B, Ombokoro            | 110. Alex Jurua, Ekarakafe,<br>Odravu              | 138. Anzilina Aberu, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro          |
| 83. Alex Adaku, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro                  | 111. Oтуру Magret, Obopi<br>West, Odravu           | 139. Ejidra Geoffrey, Obavu<br>B, Ombokoro         |
| 84. Okuyo Matia, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro                 | 112. Onzia Flister, Adruvu,<br>Ombaci              | 140. Ajio Salli, Olivu A,<br>Ombokoro              |
| 85. Esimandre Velerio,<br>Obavu B, Ombokoro           | 113. Oriku Saverio, Adruvu,<br>Ombaci              | 141. Primo Dio Odriga, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro  |
| 86. Angucia Rozalia, Obavu<br>B, Ombokoro             | 114. Candiru Jita, Andivu,<br>Ombaci               | 142. Deboru Elizabeth, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro  |
| 87. Atiku Silvio, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro                | 115. Ida Oguaru, Andivu,<br>Ombaci                 | 143. Cinaa, Olivu Maracha,<br>Ombokoro             |
| 88. Adomati Mark, Obavu B,<br>Ombokoro                | 116. Luka Wadri Otundua,<br>Andruvu, Ombaci        | 144. Koko, Olivu Maracha,<br>Ombokoro              |
| 89. Totiku Sabina, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro         | 117. Ajuaka Severino,<br>Anikani, Ombaci           | 145. Ondoru Domitila, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro   |
| 90. Orodriyo Venterino,<br>Olivu Maracha,<br>Ombokoro | 118. Deniel Adeyia, Gitiku<br>Vura, Ombaci         | 146. Baifa Tokoru, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro      |
| 91. Ezatiru Mariana, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro       | 119. Verronika Okuonziru,<br>Obavu B, Ombaci       | 147. Eliza Drakuru, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro     |
| 92. Pia Josphina, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro          | 120. Hellen Ariperu, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombaci      | 148. Mariko Abirani, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro    |
| 93. Anna Driwaru, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro          | 121. Aziku Abiria, Ombavu,<br>Ombaci               | 149. Titia Stephen, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro     |
| 94. Ajidiru Elizabeth, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro     | 122. Osoru Ruzalia, Tukaa,<br>Ombaci               | 150. Erejo Julius, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro      |
| 95. Avuru Maria, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro           | 123. Aniku Serepta, Zeuva,<br>Ombaci               | 151. Betty Angucia, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro     |
| 96. Akumaru Esther, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro        | 124. Ekayi Elerino, Andivu,<br>Ombokoro            | 152. Adroaa Kasimiro, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro   |
| 97. Madira Karilo, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro         | 125. Pasikulin, Draru, Andivu<br>Ombokoro          | 153. Cemaru Felemina, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro   |
| 98. Apangu Gilbertadeti,<br>Tiavu, Ombokoro           | 126. Enzikuru Esther, Andivu,<br>Ombokoro          | 154. Telee Nola, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro        |
| 99. Adiru Matilida, Ombavu,<br>Ombokoro               | 127. Evalina Aberu, Andivu,<br>Ombokoro            | 155. Okuyo Robert, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro      |
| 100. Alex Jurua, Ekarakafe,<br>Adravu                 | 128. Madroru Maranjiana,<br>Andruvu, Ombokoro      | 156. Omviru Eva, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro        |
| 101. Regina Abuko,<br>Ekarakafe, Adravu               | 129. Levira Iceru, Obavu,<br>Ombokoro              | 157. Adrapia Josephine, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro |
| 102. Nemia Merry, Ekarakafe,                          | 130. Nyokaru Mariana,<br>Obavu, Ombokoro           | 158. Joyce Bako, Olivu<br>Maracha, Ombokoro        |
|   |  | 159. Perina Ajiko, Olivu                           |

## Appendix B – Partial List of Victims and Survivors of the Ombaci Massacre

- Maracha, Ombokoro  
 160. Ezaru Mariana, Olivu Maracha, Ombokoro  
 161. Oloya Gabriel, Olivu Maracha, Ombokoro  
 162. Wadri William, Oluadri T C, Ombokoro  
 163. Julliat Etama, Oluadri T C, Ombokoro  
 164. Asuruma Peter, Oluodri, Ombokoro  
 165. Prisila Kaliru, Oluodri, Ombokoro  
 166. Anjilina Olikuru, Oluodri Trd C, Ombokoro  
 167. Luliji Kollii, Oluodri Trd C, Ombokoro  
 168. Polina Ondoru, Oluodri Trd C, Ombokoro  
 169. Agness Teru, Oluodri Trd C, Ombokoro  
 170. Anjilina Odaru, Oluodri Trd C, Ombokoro  
 171. Etoma Joseph, Oluodri/Tc, Ombokoro  
 172. Terezina Odaru, Ombavu B, Ombokoro  
 173. Candiru Domitila, Tiavu, Ombokoro  
 174. Anguyo Jino, Tiavu, Ombokoro  
 175. Kasito Ombani, Yabia Voko, Ombokoro  
 176. Drajiro Sabina, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 177. Ajio Rose, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 178. Asua Marko, Ekarakafe, Ombokoro  
 179. Maranjiana Offoroto, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 180. Adia Charles, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 181. Olube Peter, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 182. Ezaru Lina, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 183. Oguo Peter, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 184. Kanyikia Kasto, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 185. Terezina Otia, Yabiavoko, Ombokoro  
 186. Acia Filda, Adavu, Oreku  
 187. Penina Drabo, Adavu, Oreku  
 188. Ayigaru Dillis, Adavu, Oreku  
 189. Matiru Hellen, Adavu, Oreku  
 190. Ayikoru Joyce, Olivu B, Oreku  
 191. Eyotaru Veronica, Ariko A, Robu  
 192. Etoma Cosmas, Ariko A, Robu  
 193. Angubo Arikanjilo, Olivu A, Robu  
 194. Lazoro Agudu, Oreku, Robu  
 195. Dominiko Odulu, Oluodri Trd C, Ombokoro
- Dadamu sub-county*  
 196. Bileru Oliver, Kuruna, Yapi  
 197. Abdul Said, Dadamu, Ariwara  
 198. Ismail Said, Dadamu, Ariwara  
 199. Peter Adaku, Anikani, Dadamu  
 200. Piriou Martin, Kuluva, Dadamu  
 201. Bileti Gabriel, Kuluva, Dadamu  
 202. Bayo Gabriel, Kuluva, Dadamu  
 203. Candiru Jeska, Kuluva, Dadamu  
 204. Abiria Mariana, Kuluva, Dadamu  
 205. Nyakuza Polina, Kuluva, Dadamu  
 206. Munduru Zam, Yapi, Dadamu  
 207. Tereza Ajidiru, Kuluva, Eyapi  
 208. Pulu Patrick, Lebu, Rece  
 209. Musa Abudulayi, Asuru, Tanganyika  
 210. Kemisa Araba, Asuru, Tanganyika  
 211. Aputru Musa, Asuru, Tanganyika  
 212. Amina Musa, Asuru, Tanganyika  
 213. John Anguzu, Kuluva, Yapi
214. Odaru Lucy, Kuluva, Yapi  
 215. Inzima Lazaro, Indriba, Oduluba
- Katrini sub-county*  
 216. Alica Majid Agoro, Onia, Ocopi  
 217. Etoma D Dravile, Itia, Olea  
 218. Dino Obiru, Kuli, Olua  
 219. Ezaga Rone, Kuli, Olua  
 220. Pia Obideru, Ogami, Wandii
- Killed in the massacre**  
*Name, Village, Parish*  
*Dadamu sub-county*  
 1. Wiria Lawura  
 2. Silman Said, Dadamu, Ariwara  
 3. Ali Silman, Dadamu, Ariwara  
 4. Ramandan Silman, Dadamu, Ariwara  
 5. Safia Simile, Dadamu, Ariwara  
 6. Olobi Buatru, Dadamu  
 7. Gowa Alahai, Yapi  
 8. Kelili Guma, Ociba
- Maniba sub-county*  
 9. Alaka George, Andruvu, Ombaci  
 10. Agonda Peter, Olivu B, Oreku  
 11. Awia Ayubu, Olivu B, Oreku  
 12. Husein Dogo-Dogo, Olivu A, Oreku  
 13. Anguako Jackson, Olivu A, Oreku  
 14. Mary Driciru, Olivu B, Robu  
 15. Njukua Garaziano Mathias, Andruvu, Ombaci  
 16. Edebua, Obavu, Ombokoro

# APPENDIX B – Partial List of the Dead and Survivors In and Around Lodonga Mission

## **Killed in the mission**

1. Gabriel Abariza
2. Betrando Andabu
3. Leone Buga
4. Ambrozina Anjenduru
5. Sabina Ondo
6. Lucia Asee
7. Lilly Munduru
8. Rosalia Aga
9. Frederick Odruga
10. Khemisi
11. Brother Jacob Dravo
12. Lemeriga
13. Francesko Abiriga
14. Mindre
15. Michael Longa
16. Marcelina Afura

17. Maria Dee
18. Maddalena Anderu
19. Ipolito

## **Killed at home by government soldiers**

19. Teresa Itoro
20. Moses
21. Lorenzo Onjima
22. Emmanuel Musungule
23. Onoriata Azia and her child
24. Janeto Bakole
25. Akasa
26. Sahaban Wembea
27. Drabia Oresto
28. Enrikieta
29. Alsandro Ozule

30. Ava
31. Ide Yasin
32. Jeina Agondua
33. Alli

## **Killed by rebels at home**

34. Frederick Avutiga
35. Mariata Oyoso
36. Onesimo Buga
37. Kamillo Wani

## **Survivors**

1. Augusto Aliga
2. Nicholas Ocoo
3. Valerio Abutra
4. Michael Andrua



**L**ocated just 4 kilometres north-west of Arua town on the Kaya Highway/Rhino Camp Road, in Arua District is Ombaci College. On Wednesday, June 24, 1981, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) attacked civilians who had taken refuge at Ombaci Colleges, claiming the lives of close to 100 people and leaving countless wounded.

This report presents a detailed account of what took place during the Ombaci Massacre and the lasting effect it has had on the survivors based on individual interviews and focus group discussions with survivors and relatives of the victims. The massacre was by all accounts extremely chaotic, with groups of soldiers entering from all sides of the school and mission, and roving from room to room shooting and looting.

This highlights the challenges survivors continue to face and make a number of recommendations which arose from our interviews, chiefly a call for compensation of survivors, as well as support for livelihoods, education, and reconciliation.



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