



# IN THE SERVICE OF THE LORD'S ARMY



## National Memory & Peace Documentation Centre

Issue # 8

Written by Theo Hollander

# The Attack on Palataka

## *Synopsis*

### **BACK COVER:**

"At the age of fourteen, I had killed more people than some of the most notorious serial killers that the world has ever known. But that doesn't mean that I am an evil man, or that I am mentally ill. I never killed anyone out of pure cruelty or because of sheer hatred. I killed them because I had to. I had no other choice. It was either them or me. Or at least, this is what I keep on telling myself..."

In the service of the Lord's army tells the story of how the war in northern Uganda changed my life forever. It will show how, at the age of twelve, I was transformed from cheerful child into a cold-blooded killer in the so-called army of the Lord, otherwise known as the Lord's Resistance Army."

### **Summary:**

"In the service of the Lord's army" is a biography about Norman Okello; a young man from northern Uganda who was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army at the age of twelve and forced to become one of its harbingers of death. This book will tell a true story of epic proportions, about severe hardships and extreme strength and resilience in events that happened in a strange but real world about fifteen years ago.

The book tells the tale of how one of the most brutal rebel groups in the world changed the life of one individual irreversibly. It will show how a young child was able to cope in this hostile environment and navigate through all the hardships. It shows the constant struggles that Norman had with himself trying to keep his humanity, while it is the very loss of humanity and the will to survive at all cost that makes him human. This book will tell about Norman's life and the extraordinary events in which he was directly involved. From his idyllic early childhood which reveals this part of Africa in its full beauty, to his combat, abduction and punishment missions which can be added to the blackest pages of human history.

## Chapter 8

Almost a year had passed now since my abduction. With the exception of several officers, the bullying had stopped. By this time, I rarely thought about my former life.

After I came back from my mission, life in Palataka hadn't changed all that much, with a few exceptions. Ojara had put in a good word for me, describing how well I performed, and for this reason my status improved a bit. My act to plunder the Sudanese village gained me some respect among the higher officers. and my direct commander seemed to have forgiven me, at least he didn't mention my treacherous act anymore. Only once did he tell me very clearly that if I would ever again went to a higher commander to complain about him behind his back, he would personally kill me. I was careful enough to take his words very seriously.

Apart from my improved status, the famine in the area continued. In the weeks following our return I started to lose weight and every day life was a struggle to find enough food.

After several weeks rumours began that there was an increasing rate of enemy activity in our area, and that troops were massing together to plan our destruction. It was unclear where these rumours originated, as ordinary privates were never informed about the strategic issues, but somehow these stories spread. I thought that our Arab allies, who were usually more talkative and less disciplined, were the source of this talk..

One morning I woke up before sunrise ex-

pecting the day to begin with the usual routine of a morning march. In the darkness of pre-dawn I went to the stream to fill a jerry can of water. Upon my return I passed the gate of Control Atar and I saw that a very large group was amassing there, ready to march out. Although this wasn't an unusual sight, as battle groups departed all the time towards Uganda, there seemed to be something with this group that was different. Their equipment was light, indicating that this group was equipped for fast movement rather than for endurance. Normally when groups went to Uganda they carried extra guns, artillery, and ammunition, all to be stashed somewhere in the bush to avoid having to return to Sudan for resupply. However, this group was carrying only a few provisions for a short march and not enough ammunition for an extended campaign.

Without asking what was going on, I passed the group and I went to the yate of Stockry to deliver the jerry can of water to my commander. My commander then told me that one of the artillery boys of the battle group had fallen sick and that I was needed to replace him. He told me to hurry as the group was all set to leave. My AK 47 was already over my shoulder so I only took the time to collect some extra ammunition and grenades, and then hurried back to Control Atar to join the battle group. I didn't mind that I was selected. In fact I had become a little bored with the daily routine in Palataka and was glad to have the opportunity to escape it.

It was still very early morning when we set out. Because we were armed very lightly we moved with great speed. We were not told where we were going, or the nature of the

mission. The only thing I knew was that we were in a great hurry and that we were heading in the direction of the Ugandan border. My colleagues and I didn't discuss it, since many of us believed it was bad luck to talk about a mission beforehand.

The speed with which we were marching was somewhere between running and walking, which gave me a clue about the destination. A slower pace would be used for a long distance journey, running was reserved for short distances, so it had to be something mid-range. We quickly crossed a tremendous distance as we steadily descended downhill. We were not far from the route that I had taken two and a half months earlier when I returned to Uganda for the first time. Morning turned into noon and then into afternoon, and still we continued our march. Finally around four in the afternoon we were allowed a break. Our commander instructed us to eat all the food that we had brought with us, and then ordered us to remain there as he went on ahead.

Initially it was all quiet around us. To pass the time there was a lot of joking between us. The humour or was very dark, as we joked for example about the naming of some of my colleagues or the things that our victims had said before they were killed. After about half an hour, the atmosphere changed a little. Although our commander still hadn't returned, we started to hear gunfire from a far distance. It was clear that this was why we were sent here. The moment we heard the sounds of battle all joking stopped and our loaded guns were pointed into the direction of the gunfire. This almost proved fatal to

our commander when he finally returned to explain the mission to us.

He explained that we had arrived at a place called Pajok, where a full battalion of the Sudanese army was under severe attack by a combined force of Ugandan soldiers, Sudanese rebels and a new force he called "mercenaries". This was an unfamiliar English word but I would soon find out its meaning. He told us that we were fighting a well-armed enemy of at least a brigade in strength. In comparison, we had only one full battalion, which was strengthened by a battalion or two from our Arab allies. We were ordered to march out again and soon we came to a fast flowing river. We crossed it in the usual way and headed towards the action. Our progress slowed significantly as we entered the battle zone. When we got closer, the gunfire slowly died out, which indicated that one episode of the battle had ended. At a certain point our commander told us to line up in a long line and to let nobody pass. He left us to defend this line, returning shortly with around one or two hundred additional Arab fighters.

For a long while we stood there in the bush, waiting for our enemies to approach. We were not allowed to sit or lie down. Instead we were told to face our enemy while standing and we were given the firm order that whatever happened we were not to retreat. We spent at least one hour this way in tense silence. Eventually, the Arabs who were with us began to complain about the heat of the sun and some of them even requested to go back to their position., Our commander was very tough on them. As always, we proved to be the more disciplined soldiers. Another half hour passed.

Then all around us hell broke loose.

The RPG that flew towards us caught us by surprise. It hit about twenty meters to the left where I stood where a small group of Arabs stood close to each other. The initial RPG round killed two of them and wounded several others. I saw their bodies fly but immediately my attention shifted in front of me. A few seconds passed and I still didn't see anything. Suddenly we were hit by all kinds of artillery. Mortar shells were exploding all around us. Through the explosions I heard a tank rolling in our direction. This was when it became clear that this would be a very heavy battle, unlike any that I had experienced before.

Among the wounded was a guy who stood next to me when the whole attack began. As we advanced ahead he was only three meters away from me, when he was shot and badly hurt. The bullet that had hit his leg had completely shattered his bone and he was screaming in pain. For a split second I realised that it could have been me lying there, but I immediately suppressed this thought. In battle you shouldn't think about these things. Our commander put a stick in his mouth and he told him to hold on and to be quiet.

The bombardment continued for several minutes and then, as sudden as it started, it stopped. At that moment I saw the first foot soldiers marching towards us, from approximately one hundred meters away. This is when the battle really began. I targeted my gun on the first soldier and for this first shot I aimed really well. A fraction

of a second later he lay dead on the ground. All around me my colleagues unloaded their guns on our enemies while we slowly advanced forward. After the tank shot its first few rounds it was destroyed by several of our RPGs. There were only a few vehicles that attacked us and soon they were rendered useless.

We held the high ground, and as we slowly advanced downwards our enemies fell in the hundreds. The enemies that advanced on us moved in very long column three to four men deep deep. They tried to advance strategically, which meant that the first line would take cover, shoot at us while the next line advanced. Initially this tactic worked causing many deaths on our side, but we eventually proved to be superior and soon our enemies had no choice but to retreat.

I have no clue as to how many soldiers I shot or who I was actually fighting, but it was clear that they had underestimated us. The heaviest fighting took place about one hundred meters away from me, towards the position where the tanks were disabled. Here the Arabs were fighting alongside my colleagues. This group had destroyed the tanks and they also had the majority of the RPGs. The attacking forces did not expect that in between attacks the Arabs had been reinforced with a full battalion of LRA soldiers. The battalion they send towards us was clearly not enough. I have no way of recalling how long it took us to force them to retreat but it was still light when they started running away. We ran after them and I managed to shoot one more soldier in his back, when I heard my commander scream that we were to return to our initial position.

When we were back our commander reported the damage. I was reminded of my belief that success in battle depends on the breast that the soldiers suckled when they were babies. Our Acholi mothers had strong breasts and because we had suckled from them as babies we were much stronger soldiers. Many of the Arabs had fled during the battle and it was our soldiers who had brought the victory. I wouldn't say that in battle I was untouched by fear, but with me, fear caused an intense focus and a stronger determination to kill, rather than a black out or urge to flee.

But no matter how strong the breast or how much holy Shea oil we had smeared on our bodies, bullets did harm us as well. Among the LRA soldiers we sustained at least thirty deaths and wounded. The Arabs that didn't flee had been hit badly. Our commander send an Arabic lieutenant to see where his forces had run and to order them back. Some other Arabs and Acholi's were ordered to bring the wounded to the sickbay of the Arabs.

In the meantime we held our position and our focus was entirely directed to the bush in front of us. My eyes scouted the bush and accept for some dead bodies, mainly of our enemies, I didn't see anything of concern. Our commander congratulated us for our performance but he told us firmly that the battle had just begun and we were to expect more.

As dusk began to fall the second wave of attack ensued. This time our enemies did not make the mistake to underestimate us. As with the first attack, the battle began with

significant artillery fire from the mortars and tanks. Explosions all around me ripped my eardrums and beneath this sound I heard many tanks and ARCs rolling in our direction. When the bombardment stopped we saw the first ground forces approaching. These ground forces were not Africans; they were the mercenaries that our commander had warned us about. In fighting them I did notice two differences. Their aim was much better and whenever they shot at us, they rarely missed. Yet their aim was compromised by their light colour. Especially in the dusk, they stood out, which offered us very clear targets. It soon became clear to us that these white men were just as fragile to bullets as our black enemies and many of them died.

Then the tanks came. Because we were equipped only lightly we had no means to fight these tanks. We only had a few remaining RPGs and some B 10s, but not enough to destroy all that was rolling in our direction. Furthermore, the foot soldiers were not only better trained, but there were also more of them. I knew for sure that I had killed at least one so-called mercenary, but they shot many more of us. Instead of advancing, we were forced to shoot while we walked backwards. As always, the first to retreat were the Arabs, but the moment our commander saw them fleeing he followed them. When I saw my commander running off I quickly followed.

Soon we all retreated and there was nothing glorious about it. We sustained much more casualties than in our first wave and this time we left our wounded where they fell. While we ran away the mercenaries pursued us, but soon we had lost them. We all gathered at the

river and we crossed it before even performing our body count. I think that we had lost at least 40 people during the first few minutes of the second attack and all in all I estimate that out of the 300 people who sat out, only two hundred returned.

On the other side of the river our commander told us that the brigade that had just defeated us was only a small fraction of the entire army. This massive enemy force was rolling towards Palataka for a major attack. We were ordered to rush back to assist in the defence of Palataka with all the speed that we could muster. To move more quickly, we left the few lightly wounded behind. These lightly wounded men were instructed to return at their own speed.

Our return speed was even faster than the speed we used to reach Pajok, despite the fact that it was completely dark but for a half lit moon. We encountered only one road that we had to pass, the road to Winkibui. After our commander determined the road to be free from enemies, we crossed it was extreme speed. The road was at least three metres wide but we used only one step to cross it. This road was still two hours from Palataka. Eventually we had to slow our speed a bit because even the commander himself couldn't keep up anymore, but still we marched faster than any normal army would.

When we were around two kilometers away from the camp our commander called in to inform them that we were coming. We arrived in Palataka at around one or two in the morning finding the camp in the highest state of alert. We first encountered the

patrolling units. They weren't there to stop an attack, but rather to take away the element of surprise in case the enemy attempted an attack in the middle of the night.

But we were not worried about an immediate attack. Although the main forces of our enemy had a head start, none of us believed that they had marched so fast that they had already reached Palataka. Furthermore, our enemies were equipped with tanks, katusza's and APCs, and considering the extremely bad conditions of the roads in Sudan, it would still take them at least ten to twelve hours to reach Palataka. So for the moment we were safe.

When we arrived Joseph Kony himself was awaiting us. He told us how proud he was of our victory, but that we had to be aware of the visitors who were coming. He started a small speech about what type of welcome we would give our visitors, but I was unable to focus. The only thing I wanted was to lie down and to rest after a gruelling day and the fastest march that I had ever walked. Kony told us that we had to be alert and that we could not sleep in our huts that night. Instead we were all ordered to go to the trenches, where we were allowed some good hours of sleep before the battle was to begin. Despite the discomfort of the location, it took me only seconds before I was gone.

The next morning I woke up very early. An eerie atmosphere lay over Palataka; it was unusually quiet and everybody was tense. We believed that it was here that we would take a final stand against our enemy. The terrible battle of Pajok would only be an initial taste of what awaited us this day.

Strategically we were in a very good position. Although not really on a hill, we did hold the high ground and the entire encampment was surrounded by deep trenches. Furthermore we were also very heavily equipped with RPGs, B 10s, mortars and enough ammunition to hold out for at least several days. To our North were the Arabs, who were equipped with tanks, heavy artillery and APCs.

In the morning at around eight o'clock some porters came who brought us a large tin which was completely filled to top with bullets. We were given extra magazines to fill so that we would not lose precious time in the middle of an attacking wave. We expected our visitors to come from the east, from the river, which was our water supply, and it was there that our heaviest and most experienced forces were concentrated. I was among them. No one else was allowed to go to the stream that morning because of the concern that our enemies had lined up at the other side of it. Throughout the night, colleagues had collected enough water to last for some days, and all the jerry cans were completely filled and distributed among the trenches. Early in the morning all the young mothers and pregnant girls were marched out of the camp, towards the northwest. All others who were capable of fighting were either in the camp, or in the trenches surrounding it. We were completely prepared and ready for the upcoming battle.

Hours passed. I had been up since dawn, but by ten o'clock there was still an eerie silence. I remained alert. The area in front of me was not very bushy, and for a length of two hun-

dred meters our enemy would have little to hide behind. The field was mainly covered by grass before thick bush stood at the banks of the stream. Behind the stream was the mountain that loomed over Palataka. I knew our enemy was out there, somewhere in the mountains at the other side of the river bank, yet I didn't see anything. At a certain point the silent tension became so unbearable that I actually wished the battle would begin, so that we could be over it sooner. In this naïve notion it was clear that I had no idea yet what I was to encounter.

At around eleven, it finally began. What I witnessed was the heaviest bombardment that I had ever seen and truly hope never to see again. It started from the other side of the mountain, where katusza, howitzers, and other heavy artillery equipment started to unload all kind bombs and heavy rockets onto Palataka. The first explosions fell in the middle of the camp, which was still full of people carrying items and equipment from one side of the camp to the other. Only once did I glimpse back, and what I saw was utter devastation. Several rockets also landed on our side of the camp setting almost everything ablaze. The air heated up directing wind toward the flames. Breathing became difficult. Our order was to remain standing and to await the enemy, but I am sure that the only thing people wanted to do was to crawl as deep as possible into the trenches. Whenever there were a few seconds in which no explosion hit our side of the camp, we could hear them falling on the other sides. The Arabs were also under heavy bombardment. Between the sound of bombardments were the sounds of those whose limbs were completely blasted off their bod-

ies. It was so terrible.

While the bombardment continued we heard many tanks rolling towards the north of the camp. Before we saw our first enemy the battle broke loose in the Arab side of the camp. This is where the main action would take place, a battle including tanks and other heavy equipment.

As this battle began, we started to see our first 'visitors' coming from the east. Line after line of them appeared from the bush some two hundred meters away from us. The lines were extremely wide, covering the whole length of the eastern trenches and they were made up out of thousands of soldiers. As they drew closer their first lines started to fire at us with massive firepower. The heavy artillery attack stopped and the mortar fire began. The front lines were equipped with RPGs and bazookas, and all around me people were dying.

From the first moment that I had seen my enemies I wanted to start firing, but our commander was very clear that we should not start shooting until they were very near, so that we wouldn't spill too many bullets. This decision cost us a tremendous amount of lives. When the first enemy lines reached the half way point of the open field we were in clear firing range of them and although only part of our bodies were revealed to them, we offered clear targets. Still our commander refused to give the order. It was only when they were about seventy or eighty meters away from us that we got the order to shoot.

A complete chaos broke loose. All around

me I saw people dying as my colleagues were hit, but by far the most casualties fell in front of us. As we got the order to fire, our enemies started to charge us. Because of the trenches our visitors had a much harder time hitting us than we did them. Running towards us they offered very clear and easy targets. Within less than a minute I shot at least ten of them, but the waves just kept coming. Those of our visitors who actually reached the trenches were welcomed by sharpened bayonets, but most never made it that far.

Another few lines advanced towards us and as I changed my magazine the soldier next to me, a kid barely my age, covered me by shooting two soldiers who were just ten metres away from our position. By the time he had emptied his magazine I had reloaded my gun and then I covered for him. Some few metres away from me a visitor managed to reach the trench. I was focussed on the action in front of me, but I heard his screams as my colleague drove a bayonet through him. The problem was that whenever someone reached the trench two soldiers had to deal with this person. This meant less fire power to hold the other lines off. But our enemy was running out of soldiers and after a ferocious first attempt they gave up their attack and they were ordered to withdraw.

At this point I heard our commander scream from the top of his lungs for us to charge. As ordered, we crawled from the trenches and ran after the enemy. We followed them for at least one hundred meters, shooting many in their backs before our commander told us to return to our trenches. This was just in time for while we ran back a heavy mortar bombardment



began in the field above our trenches. The bombardment started even before I reached my trench as I dove in mortars were falling all around us. Several of my colleagues didn't manage to reach the trench in time and were showered by the mortar splinters.

We heard our commander contacting the commanders of the southern and western trenches requesting reinforcements. When the battle on our side ceased we could hear it continuing on the Arab side of the camp. Very heavy explosions took place. When I looked around I saw that the initial bombardment had set almost all of Palataka on fire.

For a moment I sat down in my trench, crying and despairing. I had survived the first wave of attack, but I knew that this wouldn't be the end of it. The enemy forces were massive and they wouldn't give up easily. Furthermore, our safety also relied heavily on what happened in the Arab side of the camp. If their camp was breached, the enemy would be able to outflank us and then we would all be shot.

Suddenly a captain kicked me in the stomach and he told me to stand. At that moment the second wave of attack began. This wave was even more ferocious than the first, but again we managed to repel them. Their attacks kept on coming, wave after wave. In the third wave both my neighbours in the trench were shot dead, and this meant that I became very vulnerable. There was at least eight metres of trench to defend on my own, but somehow I managed. Whenever they retreated, we were ordered to follow. Then

we would run back to the trench while their mortar bombardment began. This happened several times. There was always someone who made the return too late and who was caught by the bombardment. A few times the enemy came very close, but then we shot many of them and they had to withdraw. In the meantime the battle in the northern side of the camp continued heavily and we started to hear rumours that the Arabs were losing the battle.

It was already late in the day when the decisive moment came in the battle. We were under severe attack by the ground forces who came from the east. After they had retreated several times they revised their tactics. It felt as though they threw in all their reserves for this strong attack. The attack began with a heavy mortar bombardment aimed at our trenches. Then ground forces appeared slowly from the bush near the stream, and this time they took better cover than in their initial attack making it harder for us to hit them. The previous mortar bombardments had created so many craters that the troops had much more opportunity to seek cover. Yet, the closer the enemy came, the easier it got to hit them. We were in a standoff with our enemies and for the moment we managed to hold our ground.

What we didn't know was that the battle in the northern section came to an end and the Arabs were in retreat. I was extremely lucky to be one of the first to notice this. As I hadn't heard any instruction from my commander for almost a minute I allowed myself to take a quick glimpse behind, and this is when I saw our commander in the distance, running for his life like a cowardly cheetah. Behind him

were several Arabs also on the run. I shifted my attention to the north and this is when I saw the first enemy tanks rolling in my direction. They were still far, but close enough to start bombarding the hell out of us. A fraction of a second later I crawled out of the trench and made a run for it.

In a fast and unpredictable zigzag I started to run away from this horrible scene of destruction. I had no time to warn any of my colleagues, many of whom were still completely occupied with the battle up front and had no idea of what was happening behind their backs. It was because of their cover fire that I actually stood a chance. Seconds after me several of my colleagues had also noticed what happened and they also started to run. The battle which we left behind died out quickly as it didn't take long for my fighting colleagues to notice what happened, but at that time it was already too late for them. Without anybody left to offer covering fire they proved easy targets for the thousands of foot soldiers who chased them down. The tanks soon started to open fire on the area to the east of the road that runs through the middle Palataka. By this time I had already reached the road and I was in relative safety.

There was nothing graceful or tactical about our retreat. We just ran for our lives, using a slight zigzag motion to make it difficult for my enemies to get a clear shot. Without looking back I just continued to run through what I had come to consider home. By now all the grass huts were on fire and visibility was very low because of all the thick black smoke. What I could see was utter chaos and destruction. Here and there were body parts

of those who had perished in the first wave of bombardment. All around me my colleagues ran for their lives through the thick smoke. As I passed the yate of stockry I saw that my former hut was also ablaze, in fact nothing from our brigade was still standing. Seconds later I reached the western trenches of our camps, which had just been abandoned minutes before. In a giant leap I jumped over the trenches and left the camp. I kept on moving towards the west. My commander was already far out of sight, but there were hundreds of LRA soldiers fleeing and I just kept following them. After running at top speed for more than fifteen minutes we looked around and we noticed that we were no longer being followed. We slowed our pace and began to assemble all the people that we could find.

The entire force of the LRA was scattered into dozens or maybe even hundreds of smaller groups. The group that I had followed was commanded by a major, and luckily he was in the possession of a walkie-talkie so that we could reach the main group. For many other scattered groups it took days, sometimes even weeks before they found the main group.

Kony had taken a large group of combatants, including thirty of his bodyguards, who were regarded as one of the best fighters in the LRA, to join up with all the pregnant women, the mothers and the children somewhere to the northwest of Palataka. We headed there as well, and it took us several hours to catch up with them. The main body in which we marched consisted of thousands of soldiers. As we proceeded other groups managed to find us and join our ranks. It wasn't until after midnight that we could finally rest and reflect

for the first time on what had happened that day.

Although the vast majority of the LRA had survived the attack, hundreds of our best combatants had lost their lives. Only once before, during the attack on Parongo, had I seen so much death and destruction, yet this time it was us who were the victims of the onslaught. All around me there were wounded and many of us were crying. Never had I killed so many people on one single day, nor had I seen so many of my friends die on one day. Visions of the battle ran through my head and I was completely traumatized. When I closed my eyes I saw how my fellow soldiers were shot dead when they stood just meters away from me. A very loud beep rang in my ears, but through it I still heard the extreme cries of those young porters who had lost their limbs during the initial attack. It was the newest recruits who were selected to carry messages and supplies; those with no battle experience and often without military training. The limbs I saw could have belonged to any of the three remaining kids that I had abducted and taken to Sudan.

In my mind I saw some of the people I had killed this day. Especially the first few kills of the day stuck into my mind. In my dreams they became alive again and they were very vengeful against me. I opened my eyes again, preferring to lie awake the whole night and suffer the consequences of restlessness the next day, than to see all this human suffering replayed in my mind. But even with my eyes open I was unable to escape the images; the tanks, the burning huts, the screaming soldiers, that young porter whose entire lower

body had become separated from his chest.

That night we spent under the open skies, making do with the very little that we had taken with us from Palataka. I was actually happy that our break was very short. After only half an hour we were ordered to march on again through the night.

We had lost Palataka and this meant that our future was insecure. Nobody knew where we were going or where we would sleep the next day. Although we always suffered from a lack of food in Palataka, it would be worse in other places. Palataka was extremely fertile and there was always enough water. It was an ideal area for an army to settle, but this was something that our Dinka enemy also realized, and they had mustered their full fighting force combined with their Ugandan allies and hired guns to defeat us. Only God knew where we would end up now.

It was for the first time in almost a year, since the indoctrination had begun, that I started to doubt our connection to God. If we were his army, how could he abandon us like this? I also started to question how He, in all His wisdom, could have given us such cowardice allies as the Arabs, who were the source of my worst anger. I felt that we would have won our battle if they hadn't lost theirs. I cursed the breasts from which the Arabs suckled. They were not strong breasts. They were breasts that made the children to grow up as cowards. Even all their expensive equipment, their tanks, APCs and their artillery, couldn't cover up for their cowardice nature. I was so extremely angry that evening that if an Arab would have walked into our camp, I might have shot him.

But the Arabs were also on the retreat and they had a different destination than we had.

The whole future of the LRA was unsure at this point. When we saw the first sunlight the

next morning we took our second rest. My exhaustion finally took over and I fell asleep, unsure what would happen when I woke up, but delighted that I didn't have to think about it for a few hours.

### ***About National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC)***

The National Memory and Peace Documentation Centre (NMPDC), a collaborative initiative of the Refugee Law Project, School of Law Makerere University and the Kitgum District Local Government.

The NMPDC is located in Kitgum district town council in Northern Uganda an area ravaged by over two decades of armed conflict and is struggling to recover in the post-conflict era.

As a country emerging from conflict, Uganda remains highly divided, with a weak sense of national identity, low societal solidarity amongst constituencies, a lack of information and transparency about historical events and little or no accountability for past wrong doing and acknowledgement for suffering. Uganda has a fragile democracy where unaddressed divisions and grievances can easily ignite new conflict. These deficiencies pose significant obstructions to national reconciliation, transitional justice and rule of law in the country; this is what the NMPDC aims to primarily address.

### ***About Refugee Law Project (RLP)***

The Refugee Law Project (RLP) seeks to ensure fundamental human rights for all, including; asylum seekers, refugees, and internally displaced persons within Uganda. RLP envision a country that treats all people within its borders with the same standards of respect and social justice.

For comments contact: [info@refugeelawproject.org](mailto:info@refugeelawproject.org)



# **REFUGEE LAW PROJECT**

*"A Centre for Justice and Forced Migrants"*

## **School of Law, Makerere University**



**Plot 5 & 9 Perryman Gardens,**

**Old kampala,**

**(opp. Old Kampala Primary School)**

**P.o.Box 33903**

**+256 414 343 556**

**[info@refugeelawproject.org](mailto:info@refugeelawproject.org)**

**[www.refugeelawproject.org](http://www.refugeelawproject.org)**

**[www.accsuganda.org](http://www.accsuganda.org)**

This publication was sponsored by the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK government.

Designed by Opiny shaffic with valuable input from Theo Hollander, Abigail Omojola, Dr. Chris Dolan.  
Edited by Jane Bowman.