

LETTER OF THE DAY

Peace is not the absence of war

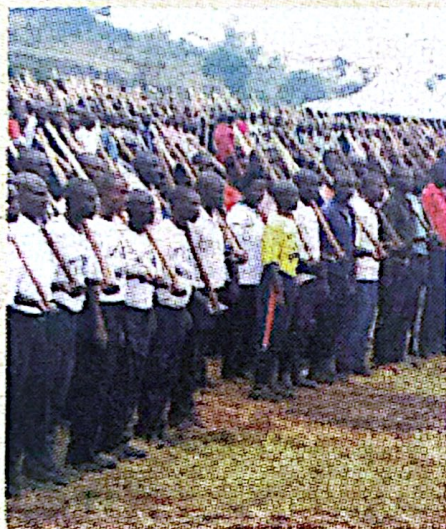
Some authors say peace is the lack of violence or conflict-ing behaviour, and the absence of threats of violence. Others view it as freedom from disturbance in the presence of social- economic prosperity and a political order that serves the true interests of the people and more.

Given the many faces of peace springing from the many frames of reference upon which we view it, does it imply that peace is in the eye of the beholder?

Unlike beauty which is about individual mental construct, peace is an entity with one universal identity holding within it the qualities that constitute the whole.

The 'popular' thought that absence of war is peace is myopic and defective. It is analogous to thinking that absence of disease is health. Health is a positive state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease, or infirmity. Similarly peace is a positive state where there exists social justice and brotherhood in an enabling environment and not merely absence of war.

Martin Luther King Jr used to talk of a negative peace where there is no outright war, but there is



underlying tension and anxiety, and positive one where there is presence of justice and brotherhood. Which of the two is raring its head more prominently in Uganda today?

Back in the 1960s, the peace movement in America was basically the idea that if the Vietnam war could stop, there would be peace. Has this assumption been validated or shattered by the frequent punctuations of peace in America by violence eruptions?

The existence of negative peace around us cannot be overstated. It would only be naïve and unreasonable to assume that tension would remain tension forever. Wars have been fought and won but peace is seen to be sinking deeper into the

abyss. Without appropriately addressing the tensions, the many layers of anger, resentment, pain, mistrust and hatred, and instead thinking that powerful armies will deliver peace will be a great misnomer.

The tensions brewing conflicts around Africa are factors of pride and selfishness of our leaders. Leadership in Africa has been undergoing conspicuous metamorphosis from outright despotic dictatorship to the camouflaged constitutional dictatorship prevalent today. The constitution and the law, made to suit the subjective interests of powers that be are changed at whim to oppress and suppress dissent, and have become the tools of dictatorship. This is a deliberate design by the leaders with their insatiable appetite for power, authority and wealth to undermine and outwit the good governance which was creeping and gaining ground in Africa.

Our leaders are cannot change even in the face of blatant reality. This has caused wars in which millions have died because one man would not back down. Change is a sign that one has grown.

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