

London anthropology professor testifies in Ongwen trial

By Vision Reporter

An anthropology professor at the London School of Economics, Tim Allen, was on Monday the first prosecution witness to testify in the trial of Dominic Ongwen, a former leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) at the International

Criminal Court in The Hague.

Tim Allen, who was called in as an expert witness, largely explained the history of Uganda and the LRA, according to a report by the Open Society Justice Initiative, monitoring the trial in The Hague, The Netherlands.

Tim Allen testified about

a report he wrote for the prosecution, explaining how the conflict in northern Uganda began and the LRA's role in the conflict. Allen has been researching on the LRA and northern Uganda since the 1980s.

The trial opened on Monday when the prosecution and

lawyers for victims gave their opening statements.

Ongwen is on trial for his alleged role in attacks on four camps for people displaced by conflict in northern Uganda between July 2002 and December 2005. He is also on trial for allegedly forcing seven women into marriage when

they were girls and committing sexual crimes against them. In addition, Ongwen has been charged with forcibly recruiting child soldiers. In total, Ongwen faces 70 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Allen told the court that people of northern Uganda and those of the southern part have had grievances against each other from the time of the country's independence.

He said ever since the southerners and northerners have allegedly traded places in committing atrocities against each other in revenge.

Allen explained that the rebel groups formed in northern Uganda to challenge President Yoweri Museveni, who became president in 1986 and continues to hold office to date. Allen told the court that these groups had a military objective, but were also steeped in the spiritual beliefs of the Acholi. He explained that this included the concept of someone being possessed by a spirit. Such a person was called *agwaka* in Acholi.

The most prominent rebel leader at the time was called Alice Auma, who it was believed was possessed by several spirits, said Allen. The dominant spirit was one called Lakwena or messenger in Acholi. Alice Auma's group became known

Allen told the court that people of northern Uganda had grievances against the south

as the Holy Spirit Movement and she became better known as Alice Lakwena.

Allen told the court that in 1987, the Holy Spirit Movement was believed to have as many as 8,000 fighters, with whom Alice Auma attempted to march to the capital, Kampala. Allen said she failed in her mission, and sometime after this, she disappeared and was later found living in a refugee camp in neighbouring Kenya.

Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, followed a similar path, saying he was possessed by spirits, Allen told the court. He said Kony's LRA did not have as many fighters as Alice Auma's group. He also said the LRA had a number of former military officers in its ranks in its early days.

Allen will continue to testify on Tuesday.



M/S BIRUNGYI, BARATA & ASSOCIATES

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT

M/s Birungyi, Barata & Associates with deep sorrow announce the death of their beloved employee Ngabirano Peace.

She passed away on the 16th January 2017 at Nakasero Hospital, Kampala.

Burial will take place on the
18th January 2017 at
Kamwezi- Kabale District.

May her soul rest in eternal peace.

For more information contact No. 0772 431 717