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WITNESS AT HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS HEARING: CHILD SACRIFICE A GROWING HUMANITARIAN CONCERN

Humanitarians in Africa cite a trend: child sacrifice to harvest organs and body parts.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22, 2023/WORLD HOPE INTERNATIONAL/ -- A witness who testified Tuesday during a U.S. House Foreign Affairs subcommittee hearing named the president of Liberia and two past presidents of the African nation among those allegedly involved in widespread ritualistic child sacrifice. He recommended U.S. sanctions to stop child sacrifice.

“Nobody wants to be sanctioned by the U.S. government,” said Alan White, Ph.D., co-executive director of the Advocacy Foundation for Human Rights and expert on war crimes in Africa.

“We have to name and shame, and we have to expose these people,” White told the Subcommittee on Global Health and Global Human Rights and International Organizations. The Sept. 19 hearing was on Efforts to Address Ritual Abuse and Sacrifice in Africa.

White named former Liberian Presidents Charles Taylor and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf allegedly in connection with child sacrifice, a practice some believe helps politicians win elections.

“The same problems continue under the current president: George Manneh Weah,” White said.

Reports of increased ritualistic child sacrifice during the October to December election season extend beyond Liberia, witnesses from Sierra Leone, Uganda and Ghana said. The trend extends beyond politics, too.

Miriam Fullah, a human trafficking protection manager with World Hope International, told the story of a child sacrifice survivor from Sierra Leone. A native doctor, Fullah said, had advised a man in his 50s that to have business success, he must “spill the blood of a virgin.” To comply, the man raped an 8-year-old child; the child nearly bled to death.

“The culture of silence is huge,” Fullah said. “We have to help people speak out.”

Another witness, Obed Byamugisha, a program adviser for Kyampisi Childcare Ministries in Uganda, testified about rescuing more than 28 children who survived sacrifice. Byamugisha said he has buried many more — 90% of children abducted for sacrifice die, he said, and most survivors are debilitated by missing limbs and private parts that were cut off for use in potions made by witch doctors. In Uganda each week, Byamugisha said, a child is reported killed for ritualistic purposes.

“The worst experience is hearing a child trying to fight for life,” he said.

Byamugisha urged the subcommittee to amend the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act to include child sacrifice as a severe form of human trafficking. The U.S. federal law provides resources to combat human trafficking domestically and worldwide. An amendment would require approval of the reauthorization by both the House and Senate.

Several subcommittee members responded to witness testimony on child sacrifice in Africa.

“This is insane that it’s been allowed,” said Rep. Christopher Smith, R-N.J., chair of the subcommittee.

Rep. Susan Wild, D-Penn., ranking member of the subcommittee, said the witness testimony was hard to hear.

“I don’t think that we, as a country, can claim the mantle of being a world leader and the most powerful country in the world unless we use our resources and, quite frankly, our privilege to fight against exploitation of all humans around the world, and especially children,” Wild said.

Members of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations are Reps.:

- Christopher Smith, R-N.J., chair
- Susan Wild, D-Penn., ranking member
- Maria Elvira Salazar, R-Fla.
- Amata Radewagen, R-American Samoa
- French Hill, R-Ark.
- Rick McCormick, R-Ga.
- John James, R-Mich.

To watch the recorded Sept. 19 hearing, read a survivor’s story and learn more about organ trafficking and child sacrifice in Africa, visit StopChildSacrifice.org.

ABOUT

World Hope International is a nonprofit humanitarian organization that works with vulnerable and exploited communities to alleviate poverty, suffering and injustice around the globe. It brings opportunity, dignity and hope to families and communities through market-based, community-driven solutions and provides emergency disaster response. Programs focus on: bringing clean water and energy solutions; offering health care, nutrition and disease prevention; and protecting the world's most vulnerable from abuse and exploitation.

The Subcommittee on Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations oversees: international health issues, including transboundary infectious diseases, maternal health and child survival, and programs related to the global ability to address health issues; population issues; the UN and its affiliated agencies (excluding peacekeeping and enforcement of UN or other international sanctions); the American Red Cross; and the Peace Corps. In addition, legislation and oversight pertaining to: implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; other matters relating to internationally recognized human rights, including legislation aimed at the promotion of human rights and democracy generally; the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and related issues; and matters as the chairman of the full committee may determine.

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