

## After years of violence, the Congo will know peace

BY KATY ANDREWS  
STAFF WRITER

Bright times are ahead in the so-called, "Heart of Darkness." After 15 years of violence, genocide and the cultivation of child soldiers, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has signed a peace treaty.

"No more blood must run," Congolese President Joseph Kabila told USA Today before signing the agreement with Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

A key component of the compromise is Congo's commitment to contain and disarm the estimated 12,000 Rwandan Hutu militia fighters who fled to Congo after taking part in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The genocide killed more than 500,000 people, with most of the victims belonging to the Tutsi minority.

War consumed the Congo in August 1998 when Rwanda and Uganda backed the Congolese rebels seeking to remove then-President Laurent Kabila from office. Kabila was accused of supporting rebels who threatened the national security of the Congo and Rwanda.

That same year, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia sent in troops to support and defend the Congo.

It is estimated that 2.5 million people have died in the conflict.

Prominent causes of death in the region range from war-induced hunger to disease and brutal killings.

"There is a time for war," Kabila told USA Today before signing the treaty. "There is also a time for peace."

Signing this agreement is a large step towards resolution. The Congolese people will now be able to live in peace and rebuild their broken country.

Alumnus Justin Kirchner '12, who studied abroad in Africa, commented on the region's existing environment.

"I see the conflict, in part, as a vestige of colonialism," said Kirchner. "Especially in a country like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which suffered the fiefdom of King Leopold. You expect to see continued power struggles, compounded with unrelenting poverty. I don't see this being 'solved' any time soon."

The March 23 Movement is a rebel military group based in the Congo and currently in armed conflict with the Congolese government. They have played a large role in the violence.

"The M23 movement has strong grievances that are shared by the population at large," said Kirchner. "Even with the suppression of the M23 group, there is no guarantee another disenfranchised populace will not take the rebel regions for themselves."

"The Congolese situation has been going on for a while, and I think it would take more than just signing a peace treaty," said senior Tessy Omina, a native of Kenya. "The guiding forces in countries such as the Congo, and a lot of African countries for that matter, is corruption and greed by leaders. Also at times, support from Westerners who, as long

as there is strife, make a fortune out of these situations in the sense of cheap minerals and natural resources."

The Congo joined the U.S. on Monday in a \$5 million campaign to search for top fugitives in the Rwandan Genocide. Nine suspects are believed to be in the Congo and are said to be at the heart of the violence.

"The rebels must immediately lay down their arms in accordance with the agreements reached in Kampala and comply with the immediate withdraw of their forces from Goma," said Spokesman for Secretary-General of the UN Ban Ki-moon to CNN.

The agreement also requires the Congo and Rwanda to provide the UN with all information they have on the locations and numbers of the Hutu militia within the Congo.

North Carolina resident Stephen McCullah, who has travelled to the Congo, commented on the peace treaty signing.

"The Congo is in pretty bad shape all the way around," states McCullah. "However, the diamonds and oil there have brought a little money and a few jobs. I doubt there is much of a difference after the peace treaty anywhere other than the east side of the Congo, because that is where they've been doing fighting."

The peace treaty serves as the beginning of change in the Congo as well as its surrounding countries. Because of this treaty, violence, rape and the uprising of child soldiers will be forced to a close in the Congo.

## Italian election goes nowhere fast

BY LANE MARTIN  
STAFF WRITER

Italy intended to have a newly elected prime minister on Feb. 25, but one week later the general election is still racked with gridlock.

Much of the Italian voters' indecision over this election might be due to the vast influence a new leader will yield over the Italian political and economic systems for the next seven years.

Business tycoon and politician Silvio Berlusconi is the longest serving post-war prime minister in Italian history. During his tenure as PM, Berlusconi has attempted to rewrite the Italian Constitution, formed a new political party and was accused of corruption. He resigned in 2011, just days before being convicted of tax fraud.

Berlusconi is currently a front-runner in the election, running for a fourth time.

From his many detractions, however, comes the public criticism he still receives regarding various scandals that led to his multiple resignations.

"He's just a rich, pampered, spoiled politician," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan. "He tried to get the Italian Parliament to pass a law that would prevent him from being prosecuted."

"I don't know if his opponents can fix things, but I think they would be better representatives of the Italian people," said Duncan. "I don't think the Italian people even like Berlusconi all that much."

Comedian-turned-politician Beppe Grillo has emerged as Berlusconi's lead competitor. Grillo advocates direct democracy and condemns political corruption. Though Berlusconi is a member of The People of Freedom party, polls show his party's support aligns more with Grillo than with the incumbent.

"Italian politics are pretty convoluted,"

said Blake Howard, a Wake Forest alumnus and former resident of Venice, Italy. "For a while, Silvio Berlusconi was PM, and then he stepped down, swearing he was done, and now he's running again."

"Right now, their economy is a mess," Howard continued. "All of the austerity measures they have taken have severely reduced how much a person can make."

Grillo's platform promises to end existing austerity measures and return Italy to its previous state of economic independence.

Austerity is the economic approach in which policies are created with the intention of reducing budget deficits during harsh financial climates. In Italy, austerity produced significant tax increases.

This economic measure was instituted in Italy by Berlusconi's successor, Prime Minister Mario Monti. According to recent polls, the Italian people no longer support the economic approach.

"Italian politics have always been a fractious brand of politics," said Assistant Professor of History Phil Slaby. "Berlusconi's brand of politics emerged out of the recessions of the 1970s and '80s."

Historically speaking, the Italian economy has been relatively unpredictable, ranging from booming, as it was in the 1950s, to the recessions beginning in 2000.

Global stock markets have taken a downturn since the general election gridlock began. Both European and American report significant losses.

Rumors of a possible end are in sight. The Five Star Movement, Grillo's prominent Italian political party, is considering forfeiting the race in return for policy concessions. Grillo's "walkout" would end this political purgatory but would continue to empower the established politician that the movement is trying to excise.

## Australian cost of living: prices now scream 'crikey'

BY JOSH BALLARD  
STAFF WRITER

You are studying abroad in scenic Sydney, Australia. After a day of researching the rich Aboriginal culture and playing with wallabies, you return to your home-stay only to realize that you are out of eggs. When you reach the store to pick up a dozen, you are shocked to see the price: five dollars.

According to 2012 data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, living costs in Australia have risen by 40 percent over the past decade.

"From July 1, 2012, the basic rate of living costs under the Migration regulations increased," stated Future Unlimited, an Australian government website promoting study abroad in the country. "Under these regulations, prospective student visa applicants must have access to \$18,962 a year for the main student."

As it stands, cost of living in Sydney is around 35 percent more than in New York City, according to Numbeo, a web database consisting of user contributions that provide financial information.

"Despite a booming labor market, many household incomes in Australia are stretched due to rising cost pressures," said JP Morgan Economist Helen Kevans to The Sydney Morning Herald.

"The cost of necessities like fruit, petrol, electricity and both rent and mortgage interest families have to pay for each week went up faster than inflation," said the Australian Council of Trade Unions in a public statement.

Food is one facet of these pressures. Future Unlimited lists the price of a little more than a pound of chicken in Australia

as approximately \$7.13. In contrast, a pound of chicken at the Harris Teeter grocery store near campus sells for \$3.00 to 5.00 on average.

An online cost of living guide from Charles Sturt University lists prices for food items in Sydney. A loaf of bread is listed at \$4 as opposed to the local Harris Teeter's \$1.50 to 3.50 and a dozen of eggs is listed at close to \$5 while a dozen eggs locally costs from \$2.00 to \$4.00.

While abroad in Australia during the summer of 2012, senior Becca Dozier experienced the high cost of food firsthand.

"While I was there, I did notice that food was a lot more expensive," said Dozier in an email interview. "I was told that's because they pay their food services employees a decent wage. Also, I believe that if anything is imported, it's more expensive because Australia is so far away from anything else."

Compare this to the experience of Sophie Long, a former resident of Sydney now living in Chicago.

"I have certainly noticed a massive difference in cost of living in Chicago versus Sydney," said Long in an email interview. "Eating out, cabs, a gym membership, public transport, groceries, clothes and pretty much everything are half to a quarter of the cost of what they were in Sydney."

However, the difference between Australian and U.S. mindsets softens the brunt of high living prices.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's "Your Better Life Index," 75 percent of people in Australia said they were "satisfied with their life." This was higher than the OECD average satisfaction rating of 59 percent for other countries.