



PHOTO FEATURE

Forgotten War: Democratic Republic of the Congo

Five world-renowned photographers from the VII Photo Agency – Ron Haviv, Gary Knight, Antonin Kratochvil, Joachim Ladefoged and James Nachtwey – travelled to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from May through August of 2005 with the international humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières/ Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in order to shed light on the suffering of the Congolese people as they struggle to survive a war that remains virtually invisible to the outside world. Their work is presented in *Democratic Republic of the Congo: Forgotten War*, a photo exhibition and a new book published by de.MO. The exhibition had its launch in New York last September and has since toured the DRC, Japan, Switzerland, Denmark, Canada and Hong Kong.

Over a decade of war and the collapse of the public health system have resulted in widespread and acute misery for people throughout the DRC. Many Congolese face extreme deprivation and violence, with brutal militia attacks and sexual violence common. Severe malnutrition and epidemics of diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS and cholera take an even greater toll as few people have access to health facilities, let alone treatment. The complex and diverse nature of the violence and neglect challenges any notion of simple, blanket solutions to address even the immediate causes of so much death and suffering.

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▲ Daily life at the Bon Marché Hospital. Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) runs the 330-bed hospital free of charge to those in need from Bunia and the Ituri region. The government-run hospital in town lacks proper facilities and charges people for healthcare. More than 3.8 million people have died in the Congo conflict since 1998. The majority of people die from disease and hunger.

Internally Displaced People (IDP) at the Tche camp in the eastern part of the Ituri province. The people from the Hema tribe fled their homes after attacks in January 2005. ▶



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© Antonin Kratochvil/VII ▶ The hands of a dying AIDS patient at a local hospital in the eastern town of Bukavu, Congo. June 2005.

VII derives its name from the number of founding photo journalists who, in September 2001, formed this collectively owned agency. Designed from the outset to be an efficient, technologically enabled distribution hub for some of the world's finest photojournalism, VII has been responsible for creating and relaying to the world many of the images that define the turbulent opening years of the 21st century. Alexandra Boulat, Ron Haviv, Gary Knight, Antonin Kratochvil, Christopher Morris, James Nachtwey and John Stanmeyer were joined in 2002 by Lauren Greenfield and in 2004 by Joachim Ladefoged. Together they document conflict – environmental, social and political, both violent and non-violent – to produce an unflinching record of the injustices created and experienced by people caught up in the events they describe.

Médecins Sans Frontières/ Doctors Without Borders (MSF) is an international independent medical humanitarian organization that delivers emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural and man-made disasters, and exclusion from healthcare in more than 70 countries. Today, MSF has more than 233 international volunteers and over 2,133 national staff working in 30 projects in six provinces of the DRC in one of the organization's largest assistance programs in the world today. www.msf.ca



© Antonin Kratochvil/VII ▶ An AIDS patient at a local hospital in the eastern town of Bukavu, Congo, being cared for by MSF doctors. June 2005.

© Joachim Ladefoged/VII

Kinshasa, Congo: ▶ Solange is 25 years of age and a sex worker in the Congo capital of Kinshasa. She and eight other sex workers are sharing a compound, where each has a very tiny room about 6 m². Here they live, eat, sleep and have sex with clients. Two children, ages 5 and 7, are also living among here. The neighbouring kids are stopping by to say hello. It seems like prostitution is a normal thing for the kids. Curtains go down when men visit the girls and after 10 minutes, they come out and leave in a hurry.

